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MUSIC AND SOUND IN SILENT FILM

From the Nickelodeon to *The Artist*

Edited by
Ruth Barton and Simon Trezise

ROUTLEDGE

Music and Sound in Silent Film

Despite their name, the silent films of the early cinematic era were frequently accompanied by music and other sound elements of many kinds, including mechanical instruments, live performers, and audience sing-alongs. The 12 chapters in this concise book explore the multitude of functions filled by music in the rapidly changing context of the silent film era, as the concept of cinema itself developed. Examples are drawn from around the globe and across the history of silent film, both during the classic era of silent film and later uses of the silent format. With contributors drawn from film studies and music disciplines, and including both senior and emerging scholars, *Music and Sound in Silent Film* offers an essential introduction to the origins of film music and the cinematic art form.

Ruth Barton is Associate Professor in the Department of Film, Trinity College Dublin. She is the author of *Irish National Cinema*, *Acting Irish in Hollywood: From Fitzgerald to Farrell*, *Hedy Lamarr: The Most Beautiful Woman in Film*, and *Rex Ingram: Visionary Director of the Silent Screen*.

Simon Trezise is Associate Professor in the Department of Music, Trinity College Dublin. He is the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to French Music*.

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Music and Sound in Silent Film

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Historical Introduction

Simon Trezise

> Should there be a fire in the booth, which may necessitate a wait of several minutes, I advise bringing up the house lights and having the men play any popular hit of the day, which they may know by heart. [. . .] The main object is to prevent the audience from getting nervous and to keep them entertained.[1]

If anything should prepare us for the strange musical world of early film exhibition it is this quote from Ernö Rapée's *Encyclopeaedia of Music for Pictures* (1925). Before entering this remote world, we might think for a moment of a glitzy film awards ceremony, with its announcements, interviews, film extracts, musical interludes, breaks for advertising, previews of parties outside the main venue, etc. Music has an almost incessant role to play on these occasions, not just when it is heard as part of the soundtrack of films, but also to mark, for example, the entrance of a presenter, build up suspense, provide backing for a brief biography, or prepare the audience for an advertising break. The music is carefully designed, fully intentional, well played, and subject no doubt to careful copyright checking. In spite of the considerable musical investment, most commentators will pay no attention to it. Few critics are likely to write, 'The entrance of Arnold Schwarzenegger was heralded by the main theme from *The Terminator*, played by the studio orchestra with additional effects created by the Lightsbounce Studio in Kansas City, subject to post-production in NBC's own studio; orchestral direction was by Martin O'Grady.' Most people might not even notice the music, let alone recall details.

With modern record-keeping and a good deal of patience, a modern researcher could reconstruct the event. He or she would certainly be able to access a YouTube recording replete with music, but getting the full scope, such as the division between pre-recorded and live performance, would take much more work. In 100 years' time, with digital obsolescence, reconstruction would be extremely difficult. Going back to the earliest period of silent film and excavating the use to which music was put is comparable: it had multidimensional functions, but probably not necessarily those we consider so obvious today, namely the illustration or expression of the film.

Right at the beginning of the first film exhibition (1895), there was no concept of film as a form. Audiences and critics had many names for the novelties they witnessed, e.g. 'moving pictures', but it took several years for a modern understanding to develop, which was only possible when the technologies started to stabilise and film-makers established a routine of production. Music-making that might or might not have accompanied early film exhibition was ephemeral; its trace has not been well preserved. There was no technology for recording these events. We might have pictures and photographs, but they tell us only limited things about what went on. As my example above adumbrates, writers about this period of cinema history hardly ever referred to the music; when they did, it was usually in too vague a way for historians to draw useful conclusions, or it was years after the event and subject to the vagaries of memory.

One way film music historians have dealt with the paucity of sources and, for a long while, inadequate research into what has survived is to invent a narrative for early film music. It seems so obvious that audiences would need help assimilating a silent presentation of moving images that much of the modern theorisation of film sound (which mostly starts in the 1930s) simply reconstructed the early period through the application of 'common sense'. In a recent contribution to film music literature, Kenneth LaFave entitles his first chapter 'The Not-So-Silent Era' and writes of the pioneering Lumière exhibition in Paris on 28 December 1895: 'There's no record of what pieces the guitarist played, but instantly the idea was born that music and moving pictures were an ideal pairing.' This music, he goes on, 'almost certainly provided the only clues as to what the audience might *feel* while watching'.[2] The guitar is a surprise, for we do know that a piano was involved, but the rest follows a familiar pattern of supposition dressed as fact.

Music, so the story went, was introduced to film audiences to cover projector noise. If not the first person to make such claims, Kurt London is the most often cited, and seems to be the primary source of this version of film music history. Writing in 1936, he presumably had access both to living memory and the last vestiges of silent film exhibition practice. For him, projector noise was the key motivator of musical accompaniment, but when the projector was screened off it became necessary to 'neutralise the silence'.[3] His theoretical stance is quite personal, and founded upon a belief in the symbiotic relationship of music and film from the start; it informs much of his writing on silent film, but is not supported by documentary evidence. He writes:

> Films, shown without a sound, on a plane, in a monotonous black and white, were in a manner of speaking dimensionless. The visual element alone and unsupported can never be sufficient substitute for an actual representation of life, and the film, to attain full artistic expression, must make use of more realistic media. So the need of sound or music was still felt, even when the primitive conditions of the early cinema had no longer to be reckoned with.[4]

The first monograph devoted solely to silent film music arrived in 1997. Martin Miller Marks' title, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies*, makes it clear that this is not intended as a comprehensive survey of silent film music practice.[5] In effect it is a study of precursors of sound film, for it concentrates on so-called 'special scores', which were scores composed or compiled for a film, neglecting or overgeneralising alternate practices. Scores such as Joseph Carl Breil's for *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) are obviously important, but they often accompanied roadshow presentations and rarely had much impact on the daily round of established venues, which had neither time nor inclination to learn a complete, often complex new score. Marks' work remains, however, pioneering, not least for his exhaustive cataloguing of extant scores, but also his questioning of assumptions around the use of music in early cinema. In an equally important recognition of the diversity of global music practices, *Music and the Silent Film* treats European scores with the same attention as it does American compositions.

Marks' intervention followed the breakthrough article, published in 1996, by Rick Altman entitled 'The Silence of the Silents'.[6] What distinguishes both these works is a new turn to the archive. Where older writing had relied on gut instinct and folk memory, Marks and then Altman insisted on backing up their historical research through detailed and meticulous referencing of sources such as trade papers, in-house publicity, and fan magazines. This hasn't taken place at the expense of philosophical engagements with early cinema, but certainly constitutes the dominant critical approach.[7]

Altman's suspicions as to exactly what was going on in early film exhibition were aroused when he noted that 'In January of 1907, it seemed, M. B. Stone's Theater in Birmingham, Alabama, had engaged Frank Strickland, "the famous blind pianist, and one of the finest soloists and accompanists in the South."'[8] Altman's radical contention based on this and myriad additional evidence is that some films were presented without music, some used music only intermittently, and others relied on quite different strategies in their presentation, including ventriloquism. His claims were consolidated in book form in 2004. *Silent Film Sound* demonstrated that only by meticulous research into surviving sources could one arrive at any safe conclusions as to what constituted silent film practice, and even then much speculation would be required to flesh out the narrative. The picture he paints is confined to the US; other parts of the world permit only a patchy historical account, though many contributions, including several in this volume, shed light on particular areas. So far as the fallout from *Silent Film Sound* is concerned, in spite of such poorly researched studies as LaFave's (see above), recent work usually revises film music history in the light of Altman's findings, challenging them as necessary. An exemplary example is James Wierzbicki's *Film Music: A History*.[9]

The historical overview of silent film sound that follows is, of necessity, heavily indebted to Altman, but is supplemented with references to published work on other cinematic cultures and observation of silent films on DVD.

I will not attempt to chart the chequered progress of sound synchronisation, which has a different history. For brief periods, synchronisation of sorts was in the commercial domain, but technical challenges around getting discs (or cylinders) to stay in synchronisation, primitive pre-valve amplification, a lack of commercial commitment, scepticism as to its usefulness, and a multiplicity of competing systems ensured that it was not until 1925 that sound on film and sound on disc started to be put on a footing that would drive out the silents within very few years.[10]

Defining what is meant by 'cinema' in the early days is challenging. A primary rationale with profound implications for the use of music is the structuring of film's sound spaces. Before the advent of specially constructed or converted theatres, film inhabited fairgrounds, circuses, music halls, and other venues, all with their own musical customs. Even as films moved into nickelodeons around 1905 in the United States (not always elsewhere), film was not the only attraction; live or mechanical musical practice was rooted in pre-film times. In none of these early sound spaces were audiences expected to be passive, silent observers – a primary pillar upon which 'modern' film music theory is built (this subject is explored by Jean Châteauvert and André Gaudreault).[11]

Much recent film history has been devoted to tracing and theorising the origins of cinema in the United States and elsewhere. Rather than constituting a break in the history of entertainment, the moving image is now understood to have emerged from the Victorians' fascination with movement, their love of optical toys, and from a succession of inventions such as the zoetrope and the praxinoscope. Tom Gunning's conceptualisation of early cinema as a 'cinema of attraction(s)', that is, a form based not on narrative continuity, but on spectacle, has been hugely influential in this regard.[12] One of the important legacies of Gunning's intervention was the possibility of establishing continuities between the early 'actualities', such as *Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895) and the fantasy stagings of Georges Méliès (*A Trip to the Moon*, 1902 and others) and today's YouTube shorts with their love of sight gags and their focus on the everyday. More than that, contemporary mainstream cinema's emphasis on spectacle, often at the expense of narrative, can be dated back to the work of the early cinema pioneers. In the same way, it is interesting to consider the continuities between the use of music and sound in early cinema and contemporary practices.

Most early cinema historians date the transition from the cinema of attractions to narrative cinema to around '1910 or even later'.[13] At this point, writers agree, music was to be subordinated to image, a situation that largely continues to this day. Along with the changes in cinema's sound, space, content, and length (multireel features became the norm around 1910) came crucial changes to the behaviour expected of audiences. For Altman, 'no single process was more important for the development of film technique than the silencing of the audience'.[14] Music played an important role in 'taming' these audiences, who have often been characterised as an

unruly mob, coming and going at all times, given to shouting greetings to neighbours, before catching up on local news, commenting vociferously on the screen action, and translating intertitles aloud for the benefit of non-English-speaking companions. At some point in the early history of cinema, audiences entered a building prepared to be immersed in an audiovisual event that was focused on the screen and the sounds coming from the pit and elsewhere. The space and the content are both important, but it is the space that mediates between sound practice and the film. Content and structure cannot in themselves be interpreted as the prime motivators of accompanimental practice.

One of the Lumière films that was allegedly accompanied by a piano at its Paris premiere in 1895 (and an organ at its London premiere) is *Employees Leaving the Lumière Factory*. One DVD release of this crucial one-minute film has a piano routinely going through the motions of matching mood to action; though it is hard to know how much thought went into the *melos* of the scene, the effect, at any rate, is dull. The DVD version is a reification of received opinion, which Altman challenges. The composer-pianist Emile Mavaral was indeed present at the Grand Café in December 1895, but a musician would have been present at the café as a matter of course. He may have contributed music before projection started, just as Dr. Leo Sommer's Blue Hungarian Band did on 23 April 1896 at Koster & Bial's Music Hall in New York City, so the music might function as fanfare.[15] These were celebratory openings, with all the associated hoopla. Altman writes:

> If music accompanied any of the opening night Vitascope films, the practice must have been short-lived, because when Lumiere's Cinématographe opened at Keith's Union Square Theater a short time later, "A lecturer was employed to explain the pictures as they were shown, but he was hardly necessary, as the views speak for themselves." Whatever the opening night configuration may have been, it authorizes no long-term conclusions.[16]

Films found their first 'home' in vaudeville, which was not seriously challenged until the nickelodeon craze started (1905). So, from 1896 to 1906, vaudeville was the mainstay of film exhibition. It had around 200 locations in the United States in 1896 and twice that number in 1906. Vaudeville was an upmarket form of variety from which smoking and drinking were banned. Each show featured 8 to 12 discrete acts of 10 to 20 minutes each. There was big money in it, attractive to top acts such as Houdini and the Spanish dancer Carmencita. Vitascope, Cinématograph, and Biograph were invited in as novelties.[17] Films came to be scheduled at the beginning and ending slots of shows, which would cycle through their acts several times a day without a break. This scheduling is significant in terms of the musical accompaniment of the films, because the final slot was when the orchestra took a break; the films must therefore often have been unaccompanied.[18]

The orchestra *potentially* available to vaudeville film exhibition paralleled that of the nickelodeons in both instrumentation and roles. In the early days, economics permitted only a lone pianist, but by the 1901–1902 season a three-piece ensemble was usual; it comprised piano, violin, and drummer. Sound effects were important, especially for comedy acts; they were provided by the orchestra, especially the drummer, who had to manipulate 'up to thirty different sound effects'.[19] Overall, little is known of film accompaniment practice in vaudeville. Powerful evidence points to there being no accompaniment and a somewhat begrudging attitude to film compared with other acts, though doubtless some theatres did more than others through music and sound effects to enhance exhibition.

The issue of films as sight-only presentations that needed no accompaniment, or at least apparently received no accompaniment, is nevertheless an oversimplification, for the presentation of films might involve multimedia elements. Popular song will be dealt with below, but other types of presentation were predicated on a live element right from the earliest days of cinema. In 1899, Edwin S. Porter had projected Act II of William Paley's version of Flotow's opera *Martha* with full accompaniment and a quartet of soloists, located behind the screen. Other operas, considerably reduced in scale, were heard, including one of the loftiest of all, Wagner's *Parsifal*, which Porter filmed for Thomas Edison in 1904. Special music was distributed and a lecturer accompanied the screenings.[20] It was opera that alerted vaudeville to the importance of film music when *The Merry Widow* arrived in 1908, but by then nickelodeons had greatly altered audience expectations and appreciation of film.[21]

For the first part of the history of film, presentation of film was a live event at which the audience would be in constant reception of spoken, musical, and sung performances, possibly during screenings, preceding them, or as part of non-cinematic acts that were interpolated between films. This observation continues to hold true even during the first part of the sound era, that is, after 1926, when live sing-alongs and organ solos, for example, still formed part of the entertainment.

This brings us to song, illustrated or otherwise. There was a vast, seemingly insatiable appetite for songs both old and new, which the industry was anxious to sate. Throughout this early period in cinema history, sheet music sold in vast quantities, usually to people whose homes were equipped with pianos. The same homes might, if they were prosperous, possess a phonograph on which the songs could be played, but before the mass adoption of recorded music and the invention of radio, consumption of popular song was a more communal event than it subsequently became (this is not to deny the many ways people may still discover popular song in clubs, bars, etc.): theatres, roadshows, funfairs, etc. were the sorts of places people could encounter and learn the songs. Before film exhibition, coloured slides were projected onto a screen with pictures and song lyrics. Singers would perform, 'lecturers' narrated, and pianists or orchestras played. The same projectors

that were used for slides could be simply adapted for film (and back again), so in vaudeville and the nickelodeon both media were used.

Altman writes that illustrated songs came to vaudeville in the mid-1890s and were a fixture by the end of the century. These songs were adapted and finally taken over by film, so vaudeville screened song films. When they were placed in the film slots of shows, it is likely that they were sometimes unaccompanied(!), in spite of Edison's injunction that a live accompaniment be provided. Other theatres did provide a live accompaniment and programmed the song films appropriately, that is, in slots other than those customarily reserved for film.[22] Popular songs also accompanied films when music was played, especially through matching songs to titles (thematic matching), a practice that modern cinema and television have revived by playing pop tunes matched to lines of dialogue.

The early nickelodeons were storefront theatres. They were modest at first, with a sheet for a screen, folding chairs, and $75 for projector. Programmes lasted 15 to 20 minutes and were repeated many times a day. Programmes changed with great frequency, as once the craze started there was considerable competition for audiences. Programmes were diverse; some even offered Sunday concerts. The nickelodeon's instrumentarium was varied: a lowly piano with a living player was essential, but various mechanical instruments were found too, including automatic pianos and phonographs (gramophones). Pictures of medium-sized theatres show a piano to the left of the screen with percussion to the side and a music stand for a violinist. This was the basic 'orchestra', which could be supplemented as required. As the nickelodeons grew in size and sophistication, the area behind the screen became a critical performance space where voices, music, and sound effects might be located.

Music was an invariable part of nickelodeons. It took two primary forms: ballyhoo and illustrated song accompaniment. Ballyhoo was mostly provided by a phonograph (barker) that sat in the projection booth next to the projector operator, who changed records or cylinders. Its horn was turned to the street to entice punters in, but it could also be heard in the auditorium. A player piano might fulfil the same role. Live musical performance was essential during song and associated acts. For the slideshow, the operator would ensure that slides were shown at the correct moments, and that for audibility purposes the barker and ventilation fans were switched off. When the song was over, he would turn on the ventilation fans, restart the barker, and start to crank the kinetoscope. He would signal to the accompanist to be ready to play for the intermission after his period of rest, which was the duration of the film screening. At least for a while, nickelodeon film exhibition would have been accompanied by fans and ballyhoo music.[23]

As films became longer and dealt with more elaborate plots, lecturers were frequently deployed to make sense of them. They might contribute dialogue as well. In small theatres of the nickelodeon period, the lecturer was often the already overworked projectionist, who would have to interpret a new

film about a subject he probably knew little about – films such as *The Scarlet Letter* (Joseph W. Smiley, George Loane Tucker, 1911), *Macbeth* (1911), *Othello* (Ugo Falena, 1909), and *Ruy Blas* (J. Stuart Blackton, 1909). Lecturers were an essential part of the performance space for at least the first two decades of cinema, and in some contexts they endured much longer (the classic voiceover of sound cinema is a sort of hangover from this practice). Lecturers were sometimes key performers who structured the sound space and absorbed the attention of the audience to a greater extent than films of the early period could achieve on their own. Actual examples of what they said are, predictably, not preserved, but there is an exception: in 1912, a German academic transcribed a lecture. The person in question was a 'gruff Berliner' interpreting *Othello* in a working-class district of Berlin. Idiomatically translated, it reads:

> Now just look at how the black watches 'is pretty wife 'ere. You can see that – (man in the front right there: smoking is not allowed in 'ere, so would yer mind . . .?) – now, where were we? Oh yes, that the jealousy of the Moor 'as reached boiling point.[24]

In Japan (also Korea, Taiwan, and parts of California with Japanese communities), there existed *benshi* or *kastuben*, who provided live narration. They were mostly male, though there were some women. There could be as many as seven or eight *kastuben* at one time, who 'dubbed' the film, often turning a bad melodrama into situation comedy. With the help of a buzzer linked to the projection booth, film speed could be varied to a greater extent than was the practice elsewhere (a constant projection speed hardly existed anywhere until the advent of the talkies, when it became essential). This practice was immensely popular and endured until the mid-1930s, when the talkies finally displaced silent cinema in Japan.[25] (Modern *détournement* and dub parodies in some ways hark back to this practice.)

There were various attempts to throw sound onto the screen during the first 15 years of film. These ranged from recruiting troupes of actors to attempt vocal synchronisation with actors in the film to building up the range of sound effects that could be accommodated behind the screen or operated by the drummer sitting beside the pianist. Altman ascribes to Lyman Howe the distinction of being, insofar as one can ever trace the origins, 'a starting point for Hollywood's later dependence on the techniques of ventriloquism'. Howe's exhibitions included talking, screaming, and matching films' vocal cues.[26] Such practices were expensive and beyond the means of most nickelodeons in search of fresh allures for their audience, so they relied more on mechanical devices, such as sound effects machines. Nevertheless, Jeffrey Klenote concludes that at a time when the film industry was addressing issues of clarity in its narratives, 'lecturers and "talkers" became increasingly attractive to exhibitors as adjunct methods for highlighting the comprehensibility and realism of film narratives.'[27] Acting troupes for voice films quickly died out

in the US, but enduring proof of the vast range of practice in cinema through the silent period is provided by Aberdeen, Scotland, which persevered with the practice of using lecturers and talkers until 1926.[28]

Altman claims that at least in America, 1910 marks a shift in musical accompaniment. From this point, there is mounting pressure from an increasingly assertive trade press to provide accompaniment to films, though theatres took a while to fall into line, and some probably never did so. The influential *Moving Picture World*, for example, became ever-more vociferous about the need for music that was helpful to the reception of the film and less of an outlet for the performers to entertain the audience, often at the expense of the film, as, for example, by choosing popular songs on the basis of image or verbal matches. For example, 'If the images show an empty glass, the accompaniment might be built around the song lyrics for "How Dry I Am."'[29] As well as playing popular tunes, some theatres seem to have cued music when it was required diegetically, e.g. when a band appears in the street. Even in the period after pressure for better practice began, a survey of San Francisco theatres in 1911–1913 found that most used mechanical music for film accompaniment, which was inherently less responsive to the changing scenes in a film. Even as late as the 1920s, 15 per cent offered no live accompaniment.[30] All this contradictory evidence inures us to the fact that the accompaniment of silent cinema, even in the 'high' period from around 1915 to its replacement by the 'talkies', was complex and inconsistent; it was often determined by local conditions and preferences.

Key developments in film include the gradual establishment of narrative cinema as the primary form (though attractions continue to this day, as in some IMAX programmes and YouTube), from around 1904, and the establishment of continuity editing. As films became longer and more ambitious, so theatres grew in size and comfort. There was a building boom in America and other countries from 1912 to 1916. Typical of new aspirations is the Regent Theatre in New York City (1913), which seated 2,460; it had an orchestra pit and organ. It was not, however, dedicated solely to cinema: in common with other spaces, variety was presented too. Such changes reflect the industry's play for middle-class audiences; so too does the promotion of filmed versions of opera. Advertisements of the day often highlighted the presence of a popular orchestra or a special appearance by a celebrated guest conductor. Just as scholarship on early cinema has turned to retrieving lost histories of women's participation in the industry, so it is also important to recognise, as several essays in this volume do, the contribution of female composers, players, and women-only orchestras to the history of early cinema entertainment.

From this time, there is a progression towards continuous music and music that was expressive as well as illustrative. Expressive music seeks to convey the mood of a scene; illustrative music acts in a more mimetic manner. Up to this point, music had often been diegetic, in the sense that it belonged to a scene in the film, but increasingly now non-diegetic music was not only accepted,

it became mandatory. A key sign that studios were concerned about music provision is Edison's musical suggestions for his films, starting in 1909. These were the forerunner of cue sheets, which were frequently issued in conjunction with the release of films from around 1910. They recall similar sheets that accompanied nineteenth-century melodrama; indeed, some of the language is the same: films also call for 'hurries' in action scenes and 'plaintives' in serious ones. Even the music is sometimes the same, because composers for theatre could simply transfer their music over to silent film accompaniment.[31]

Before looking at a typical cue sheet, we can get a flavour of changing practice in an article by Eugene A. Ahern, a pianist, writing in 1913. He recommends getting a preview of the film to help identify changes of scene that require a change of music. Appropriate music is 'music that is in keeping with the atmosphere of the picture', and has two or more different movements, so you won't need to make an entire change of music to fit the scenes. Music's tempo should also match the action.[32] Ahern is especially valuable to us, as he gives us detail. For the picture *Notre Dame* (1913), second part of the first reel, this is what he did:

> Scene 1, 'Leading Lady is Waiting for Her Lover.' Music, 'Melody of Love,' from 'Gypsy Love' until the archdeacon appears (villain); then the first part of the same piece ('Gypsy Love') which is in a minor key. (Tempo was moderato, but I hurried it to follow the heavy.)[33]

Some pianists, he complains, change music from 10 to 15 times per reel (which can take from 15 to 18 minutes), but diminishes the musical entertainment for the audience. He's not alone, though many cue sheets seem to advocate frequent changes of music, often with little regard as to how to get from one number to the next. As for popular music, he reveals that many theatre managers want hits played throughout, regardless of whether they fit the film or not. Certainly, audiences expected them, but he only uses popular song to open and close the show, on 'weeklies, educational, travelogues, scenics, and some comedies – that is, where they fit the picture.'[34] Ahern gives some advice on suitable music by genre, so for a drama he recommends 'Waltz. Mazurka or Redowa. Nocturne', and for a scenic or travelogue 'Comic Opera or Standard Selections'. His duties stretch to effects, though many pianists worked with a drummer who did most of this work. For comedies, a slide or fall can be marked with a glissando, but the music shouldn't be interrupted for more than 'half a second or so'.[35]

Some of the first cue sheets gave advice on *melos* but nothing specific. This is an Edison sheet for a short feature:

> *'Tis Now the Very Witching Time of Night*
>
> Scene 1 – Lively at start, marked march at finish
>
> 2 – Andante, tremolo

3 – Andante, tremolo change to pizzicato at ghosts

4 – Pizzicato crescendo and decrescendo

5 – Andante to donkey scene, mock march to skeletons then hurry

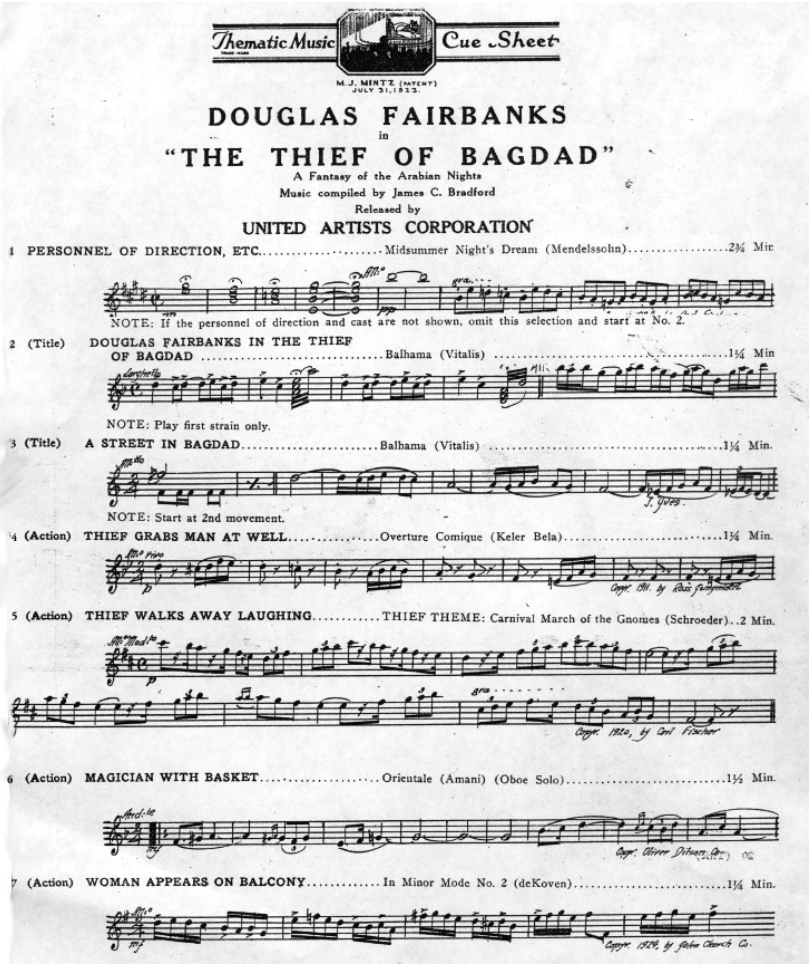
6 – Hurry, pizzicato

7 – Same as No. 1.[36]

These categories are familiar from melodrama and would have indicated a vast repertoire of suitable music. Later cue sheets specify composer and title as well, but they weren't always practical for musicians, who might not have access to the sheet music, and would have little time to prepare it for performance (given the extremely rapid turnover of most houses); many wanted to be left to get on with what they were used to. Another drawback was that cue sheets sometimes represented the narrow commercial interests of the studios that produced them, as they owned the publishers; moreover, many cue sheets were based not on viewing a film, but on a synopsis and timings – hardly authoritative. However, when cue sheets came with timings, they offered music directors a road map (plus they help modern researchers with the reconstruction of partly lost films). Regarding timings, we should add that silent films were not fixed texts: local censors, distribution houses, and exhibitors frequently edited them, even to the extent of reordering scenes, much to the detriment of the physical materials. Projection speeds varied considerably, so the average of 1,000 feet (a reel) in 15 minutes was rarely met.

Typical cue sheets of the period of 'common practice' gave musical incipits plus timings. Some of the cues might be public domain, but others involved copyright payments (alternative, free sources were sometimes offered).

As Figure I.1 shows, classical music was fair game for the movies. The opening of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* overture was frequently used in such compilations, as, for example, in Zamecnik's original score for *Wings* (William A. Wellman, 1927). Consequently, some classical music became very familiar indeed, so directors and compilers were constantly mining mostly nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources for fresh stock. While they ransacked both classical, semi-classical, and popular music for potential incidental music, composers were busy writing music for every occasion. So-called photoplay music goes back to theatrical antecedents, but it was the composer Zamecnik who started things for film with *Sam Fox Moving Picture Music* in 1913. Photoplay music was often categorised by mood, so that musicians could find exactly what they needed very quickly. Some was plundered from existing music (Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, and a few other composers were extremely popular); the rest was freshly composed. The level of specification is quite astonishing: moods and emotions are classified according to numerous subheadings, anticipating as many scenes as the film-makers' imagination could encompass, including localisation cues, such as Indian snake charmer and Turkish harem, etc. (see Figure I.2). The publishing houses


Thematic Music Cue Sheet

M. J. MINTZ (PATENT) JULY 31, 1923.

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS
in
"THE THIEF OF BAGDAD"
A Fantasy of the Arabian Nights
Music compiled by James C. Bradford
Released by
UNITED ARTISTS CORPORATION

1 PERSONNEL OF DIRECTION, ETC. ..... Midsummer Night's Dream (Mendelssohn) ..... 2¾ Min

NOTE: If the personnel of direction and cast are not shown, omit this selection and start at No. 2.

2 (Title) DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS IN THE THIEF OF BAGDAD ..... Balhama (Vitalis) ..... 1¼ Min

NOTE: Play first strain only.

3 (Title) A STREET IN BAGDAD ..... Balhama (Vitalis) ..... 1¼ Min.

NOTE: Start at 2nd movement.

4 (Action) THIEF GRABS MAN AT WELL ..... Overture Comique (Keler Bela) ..... 1¼ Min.

5 (Action) THIEF WALKS AWAY LAUGHING ..... THIEF THEME: Carnival March of the Gnomes (Schroeder) .. 2 Min.

6 (Action) MAGICIAN WITH BASKET ..... Orientale (Amani) (Oboe Solo) ..... 1½ Min.

7 (Action) WOMAN APPEARS ON BALCONY ..... In Minor Mode No. 2 (deKoven) ..... 1¼ Min.

Figure I.1 James C. Bradford, *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924)

printed parts for the music in such a way that doublings were clearly indicated in other parts, so if there was no oboist, a violinist could take over; often the organist or pianist could fill in the gaps as well. (We have come to know this music through piano versions, but many theatre libraries would have required parts, all of which had to be selected, marked up with cues for a specific film, and placed on stands at the start of each show.)

As theatres grew, so too did the means of accompaniment. Many installed organs, especially the magnificent Wurlitzer. They could play just about anything, from specialised sound effects to a multilayered orchestral texture. In Britain, the growth of the orchestra seems to have been a little ahead of the US.

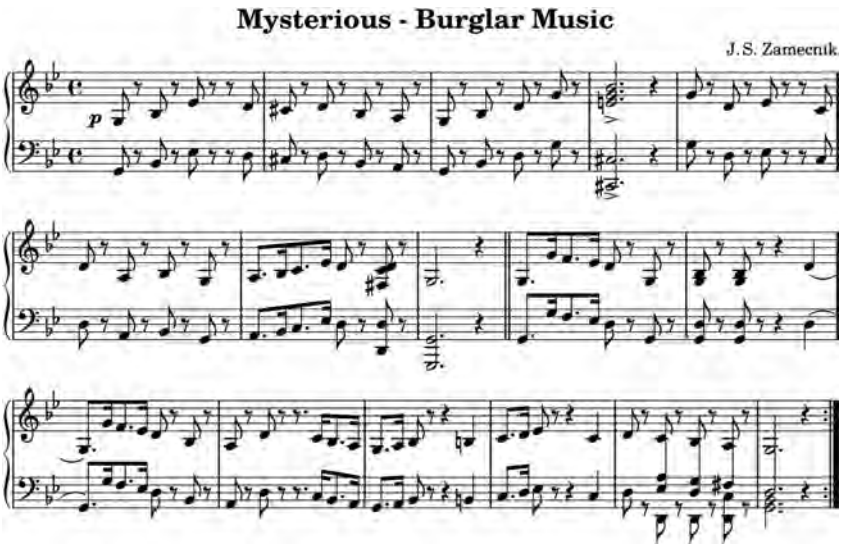


Figure 1.2 J.S. Zamecnik, Vol. 1, *Sam Fox Moving Picture Music* (1913)

Before the Cinematograph Act of 1910, the LCC investigated various unlicensed houses in search of venues in which played music made a significant contribution to the film show. If it did, the cinema required a music licence, and could be fined. Very few cinemas were found to be using music in a way that contributed much to the film. In a list of 38, 16 had no musical accompaniment, 15 used mechanical instruments, and five had piano or orchestra, but not necessarily used for the films. The Act of 1910 itself made no provision for music, so the LCC focused its attention on venues using more than one instrument. Concomitant records bear witness to rapid changes in the provision of music. Since many venues were rejecting the partly improvisatory endeavours of the pianist in favour of small orchestras, many cinemas ended up purchasing licences. An orchestra comprised five to seven instruments, but the entire band might only play during peak times. The Electric Palace, Clapham, comprised 'cello, three violins, bass, piano, organ'; Pyke's Cinematograph Theatre, Piccadilly Circus, had 'two violins, cello, bass, piano'.[37] In 1913, 50 per cent of the 271 cinemas in London had licences; by the end of 1914, 57 per cent of 314 cinemas had them. As Jon Burrows remarks, this was before the widespread availability of photoplay music and cue sheets. Music directors were making things up, and by all accounts with more regard for the concert-like impact of the music than the appositeness of the selection, though practice varied. Before radio, this was a cheap concert. In France, it was common for orchestras to play entire symphonies, not least the ever-popular Franck D minor, regardless of how it fit the film.[38]

If Britain was a little ahead in the provision of orchestras, by the 1920s some of the largest American theatres fielded vast ensembles, often of 35 players or more. A tiny handful might even rival a full symphony orchestra, with anything up to 100 players, though this was rare. The same opulent theatres might also possess at least one organ, pianos, and a music library of as many as 25,000 items. The richest houses mounted the orchestra on a lift, so that it could be raised for the live musical items (without film) and lowered for film accompaniment. Wurlitzers, bedecked with lights, could be similarly raised and lowered, to spectacular effect. The big theatres would have a music director, a synchroniser, two conductors, a librarian, and many musicians, including at least one organist. As to the medium and small theatres, any combination was possible. According to a 1922 survey by *Moving Picture World*, 29.47 per cent had an orchestra, 45.95 per cent used only an organ, and 24.58 per cent were left with a piano; the 1 per cent that didn't reply might have been silent.[39] This was a great age of employment for musicians, which was sadly to end all too soon.

Altman sets the end of the transition period as 1912, even though there must have been huge variation, and his narrative applies only to the US.[40] By 1915, the nickelodeon era was over, to be replaced by picture palaces, which became the primary source of diversion and entertainment for millions of people the world over. By the 1920s, picture houses had settled into a routine, which included a considerable quantity of live performance, not all of which was connected to film. This was the usual programme:

- overture (orchestra);
- newsreel;
- musical novelty;
- short educational film;
- vocal solo;
- two-reel comedy;
- live prologue (sometimes); and
- main feature.[41]

The overture was a short orchestral work, such as the *William Tell* overture of Rossini. It is reported that images might be projected on the screen to illustrate facets of the overture, so sheep appeared on the horizon in the Andante (the pastoral section).[42] Marches were popular in newsreels, even when not indicated in the film. Waltzes accompanied educational trips to Europe. Comedy required multiple sound effects, such as glass smashing and pistol shots, usually with popular songs related to the action; the organ officiated. Live prologues could be lavish affairs with intricate sets related to the film feature. The orchestra played for this live event. In later years, the prologue might be provided by travelling troupes of the sort portrayed by Busby Berkeley and Lloyd Bacon in the Warner musical *Footlight Parade* (1933). The first 10 minutes or so of the feature would be accompanied by orchestra, after which the organist would

take over for 30 minutes or so. The orchestra would reappear at the end. It was usually the organist who played the audience out. The programme had to fit into a tight time frame. At the Eastman Theatre, Rochester, the city's largest motion picture house, features were expected to be 80 minutes or less. If the film overran, the number of items could be reduced, the film could be cut, or it could be projected at a faster speed.[43] Cutting was common.

So far, the music discussed has been based on different methods of compilation. This accounts for most films, but a few much discussed films had special scores ordered by the producer. These go back many years and have received the most attention because they anticipate the manner in which sound film was scored. A French film by a senior French composer, Camille Saint-Saëns, is the first major production to have a composed score: *L'assassinat du duc de Guise* (1908). It is a cohesive, well-considered approach to scoring, which has been analysed by several scholars, most notably Marks.[44] When the film arrived in the US, it did so without this score, as was often the way with European imports with special scores (and there were several, especially from Italy). D.W. Griffith took music very seriously in his films and commissioned scores for several of them, most famously his masterpiece *The Birth of a Nation*, to which he contributed some of his own musical ideas. Aside from its place in race history, this seminal film was a sensation not only for its extraordinary storytelling, length, and cinematography, but also for its score, which for the East Coast roadshow was composed by Joseph Breil (the West Coast had a score by Carli Elinor). A large orchestra, often supplemented by an organ, stunned audiences, as did the sound effects, which were delivered with great precision thanks to electronic aids. Notwithstanding this success, once off the road and in regular theatres, the music was often replaced by ad hoc in-house arrangements. The music has been the subject of much analysis.[45] It is part compilation, part arrangement of existing music, and part freshly composed, so for some scenes we hear the familiar strains of a segment of Wagner's *Rienzi* overture, and the Ku Klux Klan rides in to restore order to an arrangement of the 'Ride of the Valkyries', which is repeated several times and can, to some extent, be synchronised with movement on the screen. The family episodes early in the film paint intimate portraits of the southern way of life, evoking a mood of quiet comfort and playfulness when Elsie Stoneman (Lillian Gish) is introduced with a lively theme in D major (distantly related to Bellini's *I Puritani*, 1835). The F major theme associated with the Cameron family goes in and out of 'Home Sweet Home', the old song permeating newly composed material. Many of these cues fall into a square-cut, 32-bar ternary form as was used for popular song (AABA). There are some passages of more specifically illustrative music, which may be synchronised to events on screen, such as the 'Ride of the Valkyries', and claims have been made that Breil's music reinforces the stigmatisation of African Americans in the film as a rampant threat to white female virtue.[46]

One point not lost on the industry was that Breil's 'love strain' was subsequently highly successful as a popular song with Clarence Lucas's lyrics: 'The Perfect Song'

sold many copies; its legacy is thousands of films with hit songs.[47] Breil's score also exemplifies the technique of thematic association, whereby themes attached to principal characters, love, and other matters are repeated throughout the film as appropriate. They help to unify the film and direct the audience's attention to the unfolding narrative. Such recurrences are sometimes compared with Wagner's leitmotif technique, even though they are not subject to comparable development. Thematic links of this sort were soon to be recommended for silent features. In spite of Griffith's and Breil's success in this and later films, special scores were the exception; they were too expensive and too demanding for most theatres.

Nevertheless, special scores continued to be produced and some theatres used them; quite a few survive. A major step forward came in Edmund Meisel's completely original score for *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925). Its visceral quality added a rhythmic stratum to Eisenstein's vertical montage that enhanced the film and its impact on audiences. As Lack writes, '*Potemkin* was conceived as a sound film where music supplied more than simply an illustration of screen content'. As with DVD issues of *The Birth of a Nation*, there has to be some concern at how fair an impression we are getting of the score. Breaks between cues seem clumsy in the Breil, and given the numerous editorial changes that Griffith made to the running order, we cannot be sure the right music is always used. For Meisel's score, a serious issue is that the original exhibited at 16 frames, but it has been synchronised to the score at 24 – a significant distortion.[48]

Cue sheets, photoplay music, practitioners' and critics' comments, special scores, and other sources give us an idea of what sort of music was played at cinemas during the mature period of silent film music. The picture is sparse on the finer details, such as the question of how transitions were handled from one scene to another: Was there a pause? What was the ratio between improvisation and score? How closely synchronised to the action was the rhythmic movement of the music? How loud was the music playing? Were audiences always quiet? These are things we cannot know for sure, though Gillian Anderson, a strong advocate for the use of original scores and cue sheets, writes:

> A performance of the Chaplin/Kay score for *The Circus* together with numerous other scores of the same period convinced me that these scores *were* synchronised with the moving pictures. Stop watches and metronomes were used to select exactly the right number of measures of music to fill the time necessary for a scene or part of a scene.[49]

With the advent of the talkies, some silent films were synchronised to scores with the new sound technology; some were intended from the start to be post-synchronised; others were retrospectively treated to lengthen their appeal. *Don Juan* (Alan Crosland, 1926) is possibly the most famous example of a silent movie with a synchronised special score, composed by William Axt and David Mendoza, which gives us a taste of how things might have

been arranged in the best-appointed theatres. In admiring its fluency and richness, however, it should be noted that this was a high-profile film for which the New York Philharmonic (as it is now called) had been hired. The score is abundant in Spanish colour, with memorable recurring themes (or leitmotifs) for the main characters and Borgia family. The score transitions from one theme to another seamlessly without the curious breaks that mar (or perhaps fairly represent!) the reconstruction of other special scores. In the witty scene where it is suggested to Lucrezia Borgia that Don Juan is having his way with her maid, male speech is impersonated by recitative-like figures played by a trombone, which give the score a speaking voice. There are also several synchronised sound effects, though they are managed with little precision or realism. A few cues are compiled from pre-existent operatic music. In theatres without sound equipment, scores were created in the established compilation manner.

An excellent impression of late practice in the 1920s can be garnered from Gaylord Carter's colourful account of his activities as a theatre organist. He worked in the Million Dollar Theatre, Los Angeles, with director Leo Forbstein (later Warners' music director). He recalls that even when the film had a special score, Forbstein would prefer to use his own 'synchronizer', C.P. LanFranchi, who 'had to get the music together and see that it fit, make proper cuts and arrange for the segues and do it so that when the orchestra got a hold of it, it all made sense.' This was common practice for many theatres. Help came from cue sheets, which were useful in giving advance notice of bells, steamboat whistles, whether it was comedy or drama, an Indian picture or frozen north.[50]

In marking the revival of silent film music in the past four or so decades, it is salutary to reflect on the extent to which an unsuitable score can spoil a film, and how one that is sympathetic to historical nuances can make it. Carl Davis's haunting score for Greta Garbo's *Flesh and the Devil* (Clarence Brown, 1926) is surely more sophisticated than would have been possible for the film's first release, but the musical language is apt for the subject. His music for Abel Gance's *Napoléon* (1927) recalls authentic practice in compiling and arranging a score from the classics, with an emphasis on the music of Napoleon's time, especially Beethoven (much of it recomposed to suit the cues). Regarding current live exhibition, Neil Brand's response to a public screening of the first British film to be reunited with its original score and sound effects, *The Battle of the Somme* (Geoffrey H. Malins, 1916), gives an idea of how good things might have been in the best-run theatres and how good they can still be. The pianist Stephen Horne led an ensemble of violin and organ. Brand writes:

> I have never before been able to see how a silent movie ensemble could seamlessly score a film from disparate pieces of music driven by the speed of on-screen cues [. . .] [There were] carefully improvised bridging sections to get from one cue to the next.[51]

The musicians who accompanied silent films or directed their accompaniment were often individuals with excellent musicianship, used to a routine, and amply supported by the libraries and other investment that went with film exhibition. They were also pragmatists, aware of what it would take to do the job with often very little time for preparation. This is nicely exemplified by a Dutch practitioner, Alexander Coret, whose commentary is a suitable place to leave this brief overview of silent film music. The violinist-conductor, cinema musician, and journalist describes in some detail the changing situation in Dutch theatres, especially when Dutch intertitles obviated the need for a narrator. Then there was a need for illustrative music, though some directors liked a high level of realism. One method of scoring a film was through what he calls the '*direct* on distribution method'. The elder *kapelmeesters* were 'very skilful at it':

> One of them [. . .] was undoubtedly the greatest in the field. In the morning he would look at the film with half an eye, without making a single note. When he had an impression of the thing more or less, he would put a heap of sheet music on the grand piano and everything was ready to begin. In the afternoon, before the first screening, he distributed a number of pieces to begin with. He played them through until the image changed. He then gave the sign to stop with a little red lamp which flashed on for a split second. He would then put down his violin for a moment and let the pianist improvise. In the meanwhile he took a dive into his pile of music. It took only an instant to get hold of the right number. The parts went from hand to hand rapidly, and already after a couple of seconds the sign to start was given. [. . .] Then, when after the show some necessary fitting and measuring was done, usually a proper accompaniment would come out as soon as Friday night.[52]

Notes

1 Julie Hubbert (ed.), *Celluloid Symphonies: Texts and Contexts in Film Music History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 90.
2 *Experiencing Film Music: A Listener's Companion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 1.
3 Kurt London, *Film Music* (New York: Arno Press, 1936, reprint 1970), 27–8.
4 James Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 34.
5 Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
6 Altman, 'The Silence of the Silents', *Musical Quarterly* 80 (1996), 648–718.
7 For a philosophical engagement with early cinema, see a number of the contributions to Richard Abel and Rick Altman, eds., *The Sounds of Early Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001).
8 Altman, 'The Silence of the Silents', 648.

9 Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
10 See Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 157–66.
11 'The Noises of Spectators, or the Spectator as Additive to the Spectacle', in Abel and Altman, *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, 183–204.
12 Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Cinema, Its Spectator and the Avant Garde', in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: BFI, 1990), 56–62.
13 Abel and Altman, *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, xiv.
14 Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 390.
15 'The Silence of the Silents', 658–9.
16 *New York Dramatic Mirror*, 11 July 1896, 17; quoted in Pratt, 17. In 'The Silence of the Silents', 660.
17 Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 95–6.
18 Ibid., 106.
19 Ibid., 104.
20 Ibid., 111.
21 Ibid., 114. For a philosophical consideration of the attraction of film to opera in the silent era, see Michal Grover-Friedlander, 'The Phantom of the Opera: The Lost Voice of Opera in Silent Film', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 11 (1999): 179–92.
22 Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 107–11.
23 L. Gardette, article, *Nickelodeon* (1909), quoted in Altman, 'The Silence of the Silents', 673–4.
24 Judith Buchanan, '"Now, Where Are We?" Ideal and Actual Early Cinema Lecture Practices in Britain, Germany and the United States', in Abel and Altman, *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, 38–54.
25 Russell Lack, *Twenty-Four Frames Under: A Buried History of Film Music* (London: Quartet Books, 1997), 21–2.
26 Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 155.
27 '"The Sensational Acme of Realism": "Talk" Pictures as Early Cinema Sound Practices', in Abel and Altman, *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, 161.
28 Trevor Griffiths, 'Sounding Scottish: Sound Practices and Silent Cinema in Scotland', in Abel and Altman, *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, 81.
29 'The Living Nickelodeon and Silent Film Sound Today: An Interview with Professor Rick Altman', in *New Silent Cinema*, ed. Katherine Groo and Paul Flaig (New York: Routledge, 2016), 130.
30 Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 200.
31 See Michael V. Pisani, 'When the Music Surges: Melodrama and the Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Precedents for Film Music Style and Placement', in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, ed. David Neumeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 569–79.
32 'What and How to Play for Pictures', in Hubbert, *Celluloid Symphonies*, 46–7.
33 Ibid., 46.
34 Ibid., 48–9.
35 Ibid., 50–1.
36 'Incidental Music for Edison Pictures (1909)', in Hubbert, *Celluloid Symphonies*, 40.
37 Jon Burrows, 'The Art of *Not* "Playing to Pictures" in British Cinemas, 1906–1914', in *The Sounds of the Silents in Britain*, ed. Julie Brown and Annette Davison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 119.
38 Theodore van Houten, *Silent Cinema Music in the Netherlands: The Eyl/Van Houten Collection of Film and Cinema Music in the Nederlands Filmmuseum* (Buren: F. Knuf, 1992), 22.

39 Richard Koszarski, *History of the American Cinema, Vol. 3. An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture* (New York: Scribner, 1990–2003), 41.
40 Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 249 ff.
41 Ibid., 380. For a description of the performance that accompanied the opening night of Rex Ingram's *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921), see Ruth Barton, *Rex Ingram, Visionary Director of the Silent Screen* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky), 86–7.
42 Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, 48.
43 Ibid., 53.
44 Marks, *Music and the Silent Film*.
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48 Lack, *Twenty-Four Frames Under*, 39–41.
49 'The Music of *The Circus*', in *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films: Making Music for Silent Cinema*, ed. K.J. Donnelly and Anne-Kristin Wallengreen (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 75, emphasis in original.
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51 'Hello to All This: Music, Memory and Revisiting the Great War', in *British Silent Cinema and the Great War*, ed. Michael Hammond and Michael Williams (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
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Part I

The Evolution of Sound and Performance Practices

The American Experience

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Chapter 1

'Better Music at Smaller Cost'

Selling Mechanical Instruments to American Motion Picture Houses in the 1910s

Allison Wente and James Buhler

Traditional accounts of early cinema have emphasised the importance of live musical accompaniment.[1] Music in these accounts not only substitutes for the film's lack of voice, but also compensates for the mechanical reproduction of movement. In brief, music was said to vivify the motion pictures, to give them the appearance of life, and this infusion was presumed to derive from live performance. 'You cannot mechanize art', Joseph N. Weber, President of the American Federation of Musicians, confidently proclaimed when he opened a fight against synchronised sound in 1928.[2] Others supportive of live performance were so convinced of the obviousness of this fact that they initially came out in favour of the device, presuming that it would raise expectations for musical performance in all houses and so lead to an increase in demand for union musicians.[3] Though supporters of live music would be sorely disappointed – musicians would be virtually eliminated from theatres by 1930 – Weber's confidence that film required live music to make it art is most revealing of the strength of the cultural assumption.

Of course, live music was never a necessary condition of film exhibition. Vachel Lindsay thought live music coupled aristocratic values of the theatre to the motion picture.[4] While Lindsay advocated screening films accompanied only by 'the hum of the conversing audience', exhibitors unable or unwilling to pay musicians adopted a wide number of solutions, including phonographs and other automated instruments.[5] Moreover, theatres might change policy throughout the day, using a mechanical instrument to spell a pianist on break, or as insurance in case of a musicians' strike.

Automated instruments and phonographs were also frequently deployed for ballyhoo outside theatres. Frederick J. Haskin perceptively recognised a deep affinity between the motion picture and mechanical accompaniment:

> New York's great trouble has been that the noise of the "barkers'" megaphones and phonographs at the entrances cause annoyance, and formal complaints have been filed against the nickelodeons by merchants of their neighborhoods. As a result, the barker may go, but the phonograph, under one of its many guises may remain, for, in this age of machinery that

> must soon minimize man's services in many ways, even as a mechanism throws the figures of the actors and actresses on the canvas in the darkened rooms where owl-eyed ushers skillfully find you a seat, so it must eventually furnish the entrance calls, the urgent invitations to come and see what is inside, and all the gay music that sets you to wondering what lies beyond the doors.[6]

Haskin thought the phonograph was an especially effective lure inasmuch as its disembodied sound created an enigma about its source. He also understood the motion picture theatre as following a logic of mechanisation that worked to minimise human labour. Although live music would become the ordinary practice in almost all theatrical configurations, Haskin's comment reminds us that one appeal of nickelodeons was the way they made a spectacle out of mechanisation. Exhibitors saw music and live entertainment both as an important part of a motion picture show and as a 'problem' that threatened the theatre's bottom line. Given the investment of motion pictures in mechanisation, it should hardly be surprising that many exhibitors pursued mechanical solutions to their 'music problem'.

The 'music problem' was present outside the cinema as well, as women's new roles outside of the home created a need for economical entertainment in the domestic sphere. Motion picture houses aided in society's departure from buttoned-up Victorian culture, and in leading young women away from keyboards and into entertainment venues.[7] The newly vacated piano benches in the home became markers of absent domestic labour, labour that could be carried out by a mechanical instrument, and player piano companies used this absence to their advantage with their advertisements. Magazines and newspapers included ads highlighting the instrument's perfect musical reproduction, its labour-saving capabilities, and its ability to teach young students to play through imitation.[8] Ads in period trade papers thus emphasised some of the same and some different features of mechanical instruments as those targeting the home.

In this chapter, we examine advertisements for mechanical musical instruments primarily from *Moving Picture World* (1907–1919), the leading trade paper for the motion picture industry at the time.[9] These ads were directed at exhibitors and sought to convince them of the efficacy of supplementing or replacing their musicians with mechanical instruments. We analyse and categorise these ads in order to determine what needs firms specialising in mechanical instruments identified in the film industry, and how these firms advertised their instruments to construct and address those needs. We organise the ads into two large groups – those that focus on cost savings for the theatre and those that focus on increasing patronage at the theatre.

This arrangement allows us to show how these firms sought to convince the industry that the mechanisation of musical labour improved the bottom line without needing to sacrifice quality. Although mechanised

accompaniment would not become the dominant mode of exhibition until the late 1920s, the presence of mechanical instruments in theatres helped ready exhibitors and filmgoers for what was to come. The ideological work of these ads prepared the discursive ground for the eventual mechanisation of theatre exhibition: the sound film.

Labour and Capital

The most important thing mechanical instruments offered film exhibitors was a replacement for labour. Music was one of the largest costs of running a theatre – only the film rentals routinely exceeded it in a normal theatre – and the largest cost of music was for the actual musicians. What's more, the cost of musicians rose quickly with the size of the ensemble. Although more sophisticated machines required a capable operator, the operator generally did not need to be a professional-level performer. As with much machine automation, self-playing instruments were thus a means of deskilling the labour force.[10]

Besides replacing labour, automatic musical instruments were also immune to fatigue. In a business of continuous performance, this was an especially important consideration. Live musicians required breaks, and were liable to ask for raises, get job offers from other theatres, or go on strike. Automatic instruments, on the contrary, were like projectors: they required only routine maintenance, a minimally competent employee, and a steady diet of new music rolls.

In the following, we discuss four appeals that ads made in favour of substituting automatic musical instruments for live musicians: automatic instruments as labour-saving devices, a mechanical replacement for costly musicians; the ease of operation, instruments so simple a schoolgirl could operate them; men at war, the automatic instrument as skilled labourer, keeping theatre music viable while the men of the orchestra served overseas; and automatic instruments as investment, banking on the promise that the instrument will 'pay for itself'.

Labour-Saving Device

This category includes ads that described mechanical instruments as 'all but human', and that emphasised the instruments' ability to create 'pleasing harmony' with but one operator.[11] The standard accompaniment for a small nickelodeon around 1910 would have been a pianist and often a drummer, but larger venues generally had small orchestras (anything more than a pianist and a drummer). Because film companies did not produce a sufficient number of titles for theatres to distinguish themselves on the basis of their films, many turned to music.[12] One route to differentiation was a larger and more accomplished orchestra; another was a modern mechanical instrument. For the cost-conscious exhibitor especially, the mechanical instrument had

the distinct advantage of being able to produce high-quality music with minimal labour. For example, Figure 1.1 shows a 1909 ad for Wurlitzer Automatic Musical Instruments, an early leader in providing mechanical instruments for movie theatres.[13] In the ad, every seat in the theatre is taken. As the drama unfolds on screen, several members of the audience have their heads turned towards the mechanical instrument, revealing it as an attraction. Music as an added attraction to pull in patronage was a common theme during this time, and in this ad the emphasis falls on a mechanical instrument's capability to replace human labour. The instrument replaced the labour of five musicians with better music and 'plays whenever you wish'. Unlike human labour, the Wurlitzer instrument conformed to the exhibitor's will.

Where Wurlitzer emphasised the replacement of human labour, the American Photo Player Company argued that its famed Fotoplayer produced a performance that was 'all but human'.[14] A Fotoplayer could replace several musicians, and thus appealed to exhibitors in two ways: first, to the exhibitor of a large establishment feeling the financial strain of paying musicians; and second, to the exhibitor who wanted to liven up the musical accompaniment. Another Fotoplayer ad offered the headline 'Real Music for Your Reel', making a play on film terminology to assert that the machine's music is 'real,' and 'gives life to the pictures'.[15] This idea that music vivified the inhuman motion picture was a common one at the time, but the pun disguised the fact that the proposed remedy was mechanical music. In other words, the ad suggested that it was only through further mechanical mediation that film could become more human.

An ad for the Excelsior Sound Effect Cabinet similarly promised that it was 'positively a one man machine'.[16] This ad gets at the heart of this type of appeal, reaching out to exhibitors who had limited funds or wanted a machine requiring just one operator. The machine's multiple sound options and compact size appealed to smaller theatres without space or the budget for a theatre organ. Similarly, an ad for the Cremona Solo Theatre Orchestras and Theatre Pipe Organs emphasised their labour-saving characteristics, claiming to 'not require an operator'.[17] Here, elimination of musical labour became an absolute value. Ads for Barton Piano Attachment and Lyon & Healy's Empress Bell Electric Piano promised similar savings with devices that diversified the sound while also reducing labour.[18]

The headline of an ad by the American Photo Player Company for its Robert Morton Symphony Orchestras division claimed, 'Old methods were wrong – so they had to make way for *new*'.[19] The traditional organisation of musical labour in an orchestra, the ad implied, was expensive and out of date. 'Man can no longer afford to set type by hand, nor pay the salaries of many musicians'. Labour is money, the orchestra a wasteful inefficiency. The Robert Morton Symphony Orchestra, by contrast, was a modern musical machine that concentrated musical work in order to magnify labour power. 'Because the Robert Morton Symphonic [*sic*] Orchestra presents all the instruments

☞ This Wurlitzer PianOrchestra (automatic orchestra) in an up-to-date Nickelodeon, furnishes better music than a five-piece orchestra, and replaces expensive musicians and entertainers.

Don't you think you could make more money this season if you could get first-class music at smaller cost?

Wurlitzer Automatic Musical Instruments

reproduce the playing of skilled musicians, and make you independent on the music question, as they furnish the best music in the world for your business, and play whenever you wish.

They are operated by ordinary electric light current and play thousands of selections (everything new and up-to-date), from cheap, interchangeable paper music rolls.

Prices are very reasonable, and we arrange weekly or monthly payments, the same as you pay musicians. In a few weeks the instrument is paid for, without your feeling the investment. Your music then costs nothing, and the money thus saved will pay rent.

We are the world's largest manufacturers, and supply the United States Government with musical instruments —a guarantee that prices and quality are right.

Write today to our nearest branch for our big, new 96-page catalog and testimonial booklet, showing our instruments in leading Nickelodeons. Both books are free.

THE

RUDOLPH WURLITZER CO.

117 to 121 East 4th St., CINCINNATI

NEW YORK
25 & 27 West 32nd
(Bet. B'way. & 5th Ave.)

CHICAGO
266 & 268 Wabash Av.

Figure 1.1 Ad for Wurlitzer Automatic Musical Instruments by the Rudolf Wurlitzer Company (*The Nickelodeon*, October 1909, front matter)

of an orchestra under the control of a single player . . . it has taken its place in the ranks of inventions which set new standards for human achievement'. The main claim here was not so much deskilling as concentrating labour and increasing efficiency.

Ease of Operation

Machinery was of little use if it required frequent maintenance or if it was so complicated to require a highly skilled operator. The latter issue was, after all, the very problem of the trained musician. Mechanical instrument companies therefore highlighted the ease of operation, claiming that the machines removed or reduced the need for highly skilled and expensive musicians. This set of ads appealed to cost-conscious exhibitors who wanted a machine that an ordinary worker could operate. For example, one Fotoplayer ad claimed its mechanism was 'the simplest ever devised'.[20] Another claimed to be 'the only player piano with two music rolls, allowing instant change', targeting exhibitors who wanted music to closely fit their pictures.[21] An ad for the Barton Piano Attachment similarly emphasised that 'Your Pianist can Play Seven Instruments Without leaving Their Seat', and urged exhibitors to 'glance over your Orchestra payroll and figure what a saving this would mean to you'.[22]

Figure 1.2 shows a Fotoplayer ad from 1914, which highlighted its duplex roll mechanism and promised 'immediate change from one music selection to another without discord or interruption'.[23] A later ad for Fotoplayer from 1919 made claims about the ease and smoothness of changing rolls in the Fotoplayer device.[24] The image included a well-dressed woman sitting at the instrument, with literal bells and whistles at her eye level. Her foot rests on the pump that controls dynamics, and her hands appear at the controls. The ad emphasised the ease of play, claiming it was so simple to operate that 'a schoolgirl can play it'. The schoolgirl served as a rhetorical figure of unskilled labour in general: if a schoolgirl could operate it, anyone could. An ad for the

Figure 1.2 Ad for the double tracker Fotoplayer by American Photo Player Company (*Moving Picture World*, 14 March 1914, 1469)

Kinematophone similarly claimed that 'a child can operate it'.[25] Both these ads explicitly join ease of operation to the deskilling of labour.

Men at War

This category of ads includes those that tied mechanical instruments to patriotism, implying that keeping musicians from the war front deprived the country of manpower vital to the war effort. Whereas war required the sacrifice of real men, theatres could work just as effectively with mechanical musical labour. The appeal went further still and sold patriotism as a business opportunity to rid the theatre of troublesome labour. For example, one ad from February 1918 tied the war effort to the celebration of Washington's Birthday. It told exhibitors to 'Declare your Independence', 'Fell the fetters of hesitation', and 'Liberate your music problems'.[26] The text appeared on a piano roll, as though the words were mechanically hammered out by the Fotoplayer itself, and the lower corner of the ad featured a picture of George Washington, which gave the words additional authority. The text flows like political oratory: 'the Fotoplayer is first in war', 'first in peace', and 'first in the hearts and minds of every enterprising exhibitor whose desire is economic musical accompaniment to his pictures – with artistic success'. This ad capitalised on the patriotism of wartime, tailoring its message to the prideful American exhibitor who wanted to save money and support American businesses.

Figure 1.3, another ad for the Fotoplayer, presents an image of a woman operating a double-rolled Fotoplayer. The text implores exhibitors to 'draft your music' and 'recruit your orchestra and meet the appeal of the hour'.[27] The Fotoplayer, the ad says, 'performs patriotically by releasing musicians needed in war service'. The ambiguous status of the female operator – is she playing the Fotoplayer or running it like a machine? – draws attention to the Fotoplayer, rather than the woman, as a substitute for men at war. The text also appears on a piano roll, but unlike in the previous example, here the roll seems to be feeding into the piano, assuring that the female operator will 'furnish the necessary musical appeal in a real human way'.

In each of these ads, the main appeal was to the exhibitors' patriotism. The text mentioned the economic value of the instrument, its durability, and its double tracker device that allowed for easy switching between accompanimental music. The ads also focused on repurposing women's piano skills so they could take up positions as Fotoplayer operators, replacing the orchestral men at war without any sacrifice in orchestral sound.

Investment

The final category of ads addressing labour and capital shifts the emphasis to saving money and making a good investment. The underlying appeal was

Figure 1.3 'Draft Your Music', ad for Fotoplayer by American Photo Player Company (*Moving Picture World*, 19 October 1918, 387)

to the accounting sheet: capital investment became an asset, whereas labour would only ever be a recurring cost. As a customer testimonial reprinted by the J.P. Seeburg Piano Company stated:

> The last Seeburg Motion-Picture-Player installed at our Rex Theatre is taking the place of a four piece orchestra and is giving us more satisfactory music at a savings of $250.00 per month, our music is now an investment instead of an expense.[28]

Other ads argued that an investment in a mechanical instrument would reduce labour costs so much that it would 'pay the rent' or 'pay for itself', and Seeburg told exhibitors that its Motion-Picture-Player 'gets the results' and that 'a Seeburg will save you money and increase your business'.[29]

Figure 1.4 shows a 1911 ad for a catalogue of Wurlitzer Automatic Musical Instruments. It urged exhibitors to 'get this book' – a catalogue of Wurlitzer

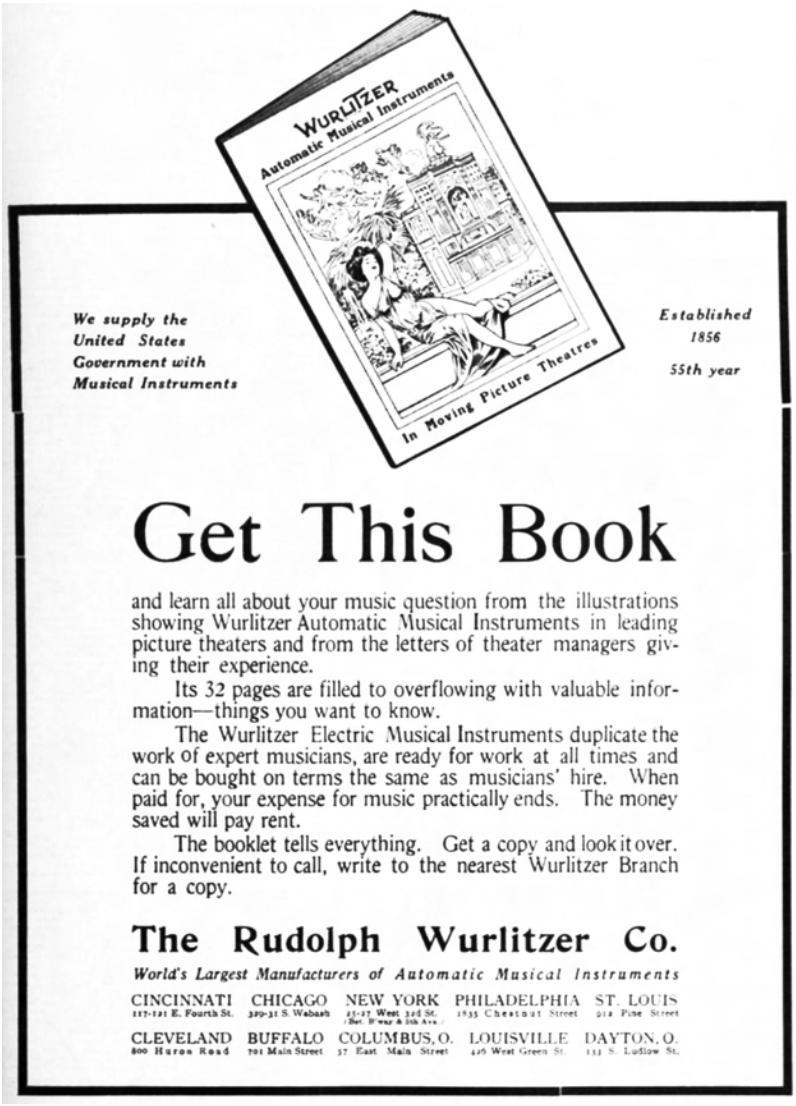

Figure 1.4 'Get This Book', ad for the Rudolf Wurlitzer Company catalogue (*Moving Picture World*, 25 November 1911, 649)

products – 'and learn all about your music question from the illustrations'. It pressed the argument that the instrument would become an investment that saved money in the long run:

> The Wurlitzer Electric Musical Instruments duplicate the work of expert musicians, are ready for work at all times and can be bought on terms the same as musicians' hire. When paid for, your expense for music practically ends. The money saved will pay rent.[30]

The ad included an image of the catalogue, whose curious cover shows the instrument in the background as a woman, evidently an actress barefoot and clad in a Grecian-style gown that is falling off one shoulder, lounged provocatively in the foreground. The image, suggestive of a set for an exotic film, identified the Wurlitzer with the motion picture, essentially rendering the instrument an integral part of the filmgoing experience.

The headline of another Wurlitzer ad made a direct appeal to return on investment: 'Make Your Picture Theater a Bigger Paying Investment'.[31] The ad painted the exhibitor as an up-to-date businessman who understood putting capital into a mechanical instrument would provide better service to the theatre and a better financial return to the business. The ad concluded with a sentence that drove this idea home: 'We have scores upon scores of testimonials from the foremost theatres in America that will prove that you should install one of these wonderful Orchestras at once if you act for your own best interests.' Along with touting the investment quality of the Unit Orchestra, this ad made an appeal to its quality as an attraction, comparing the instrument to a 'magnet of great power'. The Unit Orchestra was a theatre organ with a new action designed by Robert Hope-Jones to better approximate the sound of an orchestra. According to the ad, the instrument was an attraction in its own right.

Value and Attraction

An emphasis on drawing power and attraction of the Unit Orchestra shifted the basis of the appeal from the business to customer. Many ads combined these appeals, and a line such as 'Good Music Pays', used to advertise Bell Electric Pianos, condensed the dual appeal into a pithy maxim.[32] Implied in this line is the idea that it was worth investing in a machine that would deliver good music, because good music would attract larger crowds.

Theatres could raise profits in three basic ways: cost reduction, increased ticket prices, or increased patronage. Although trade papers occasionally argued for raising ticket prices in order to improve the overall quality of the entertainment, it is noteworthy that few made the case that the instruments were of such value that they would allow theatres to increase prices. One exception was a Wurlitzer ad reprinting a testimonial of an exhibitor: 'There is a reason why

mine is the only straight picture house in Cincinnati getting 10c. – and packing them in 3,500 a night'.[33]

In this section, we examine the ads that focused on how the mechanical instruments would help attract audiences. The basic claims were to novelty, a revelling in the wonder of the mechanical marvel; to uplift, the cultural aspiration for the better life facilitated by the machine; to celebrity endorsement, the magic of proximity and aura; and to playing the pictures, the use of the machine to engineer perfect synchronisation of music and film.

Novelty, Wonder, and Attraction

John Kasson has noted how early twentieth-century amusement parks were constructed to transmute devices of industrial production into fantasy objects of entertainment.[34] Similarly, early motion picture exhibitions featured not films, but the device itself. Only after the novelty had worn off did the films themselves begin to assume the role of the attraction.

The novelty of the musical machine promised to fill the empty seats of an exhibitor's theatre, and ads indicate that firms believed the novelty appeal worked especially well for ballyhoo. Figure 1.5 shows an ad for Deagan Lobby Chimes that made this appeal explicit. 'This is a real novelty – something so different.'[35] This difference evidently transfigured the theatrical experience. Another ad showed a crowd of people gathered around a theatre entrance.[36] 'A most unique lobby attraction – as different from the usual kind of bally-hoo as church chimes are from brass cymbals.' The ad promised overflowing theatres, with chimes that beckoned as if calling people to a religious service. Under the spell of music, theatre became a shrine.

Perhaps because the company offered different varieties of chimes and bells, and so could only ever supplement other music, ads for Deagan Bells tended to emphasise novelty. One ad implored: 'Don't Forget to put in those Deagan Bells. They are a real attraction and will increase your patronage at once.'[37] A later ad made a similar appeal for its Unaphone (a portable electrical bell instrument) as 'a business getter to liven up things for the summer months.'[38] Yet another ad promised that the Unaphone would 'double your receipts',[39] emphasising (and no doubt exaggerating) the drawing power of the novelty.

Many devices such as the Deagan Bells that supplemented rather than replaced music in the theatre used novelty and marvel as the basis of their appeal. An ad for Excela Soundograph (a sound effects cabinet) claimed, 'Everyone pronounces it a wonder.'[40] Other firms made more straightforward appeals to the wonder of a technology that could so concentrate labour. In each case, the wonder belonged less to the audience than to the exhibitor, who could marvel at the labour savings. E.J. Perry, for instance, advertised a 'Piano Orchestra Attachment' as a 'New Musical Wonder' capable of replacing an eight-piece orchestra by 'any talented pianist'.[41] These appeals obviously belonged as much to the labour-saving category discussed above, but

Deagan's Lobby Chimes

A set of "Deagan" Electrical Cathedral Chimes

(To be mounted in lobby as shown in cut)

A most unique lobby attraction—as different from the usual kind of ballyhoo as church chimes are from brass cymbals.

However, the Deagan Lobby Chimes serve the purpose of a bally-hoo. The beautiful chords from the chimes stop the passing crowds.

This is a real novelty—something so different. It gives a certain air of distinction and refinement to a theatre.

Many exhibitors ring these chimes during intermission to call attention to a new show. It is a good way to announce each new picture, and especially the first reel of a feature production. There are so many different ways an enterprising exhibitor can use these chimes to great advantage—both to himself and to his patrons.

We furnish these lobby chimes in a set of 4 units to be mounted as shown in the cut, or all together. They are made of the finest bell metal, highly polished, triple nickel plated and correctly tuned.

A real ornament to your lobby

These chimes are electrically operated and played from a keyboard which can be placed in the orchestra pit, operating booth or box office, wherever the most convenient.

Of course anybody can play this instrument. Takes about half an hour to install it and is run on ordinary dry cells.

We will send this outfit, complete, ready to install, for the REMARKABLY LOW PRICE OF $25.00

Will be sent for 10 days' trial on deposit of $5.00, C. O. D. for remainder.

J. C. DEAGAN

1776 Berteau Avenue CHICAGO, ILL.

Figure 1.5 Ad for Deagan's Lobby Chimes by J.C. Deagan (*Moving Picture World*, 2 February 1915, 1201)

novelty and wonder were sufficiently strong appeals that they could address not just the audience, but also the exhibitors.

Companies specialising in self-playing instruments and theatre organs also frequently appealed to novelty and wonder in selling their instruments, or at least to the instrument's ability to attract audiences. One of Seeburg's recurring

tag lines was 'The wonder of them all',[42] and an ad for Fotoplayer billed the device as 'a musical wonder', 'the only one of its kind manufactured'.[43] Wurlitzer made these appeals a basic element of their campaigns – a Wurlitzer added 'pulling power'. Such pull was important because 'The Greatest Expense of Any Theater is EMPTY SEATS'.[44] Indeed, 'to pull people 5, 10 and 15 blocks away, with other theatres nearer, requires an EXTRA attraction.'[45] Ad after ad emphasised the Wurlitzer's ability to attract business while also reducing costs. For example, an ad for its One Man Orchestra stated that the instrument 'Draws Capacity Houses from 11 to 11'.[46] Other ads promised to 'Boom Business *and* Cut Expenses', double attendance, or increase receipts by 25 per cent.[47] If these instruments were no longer novelties, they retained a real power to attract.

Uplift

Firms frequently made the claim that their instruments gave 'better music at smaller cost',[48] twining an appeal of improved quality with labour-saving efficiency. The term 'better music' was most frequently coupled not with the claim of efficiency, as here, but with the power of attraction, as in the previous section. A typical formulation was 'better music yields better patronage'.[49] 'Better' carried a double meaning: larger in size and better in quality, that is, class.

One Fotoplayer ad suggested that music could transform a theatre: 'Music has made these houses. Good music will make your house.'[50] Many ads featured testimonials of exhibitors who had 'boomed' their business by installing automated musical instruments. One showed theatre owner 'Billy' Brown crediting the Wurlitzer's music as 'an equal feature with the picture.'[51] Finally, Figure 1.6 shows a Fotoplayer ad telling exhibitors to 'Follow the crowds to the successful picture house.'[52] The bottom of the ad showed a long line of people gathering to enter the 'Fotoplayer Music' theatre.

Besides increasing the audience for the films, 'good' music could also raise the prestige of the theatre. Many of the ads appealed to the cultural capital of well-known composers and performers. Wurlitzer, for instance, established the superior capabilities of its One Man Orchestra by claiming it was 'used to accompany Handel's "Messiah"', and a Fotoplayer ad lists 'Beethoven's Sonatas, Wagner's Operas, Mendelssohn's Songs, MacDowell's Poems, and Massenet's Melodies' as some of the rolls available for its instrument, 'the orchestral organ for better music in motion picture temples'.[53] Music evidently had the power to transform a mere theatre into a temple.

Celebrity Endorsement

Somewhat similar to the appeals to well-known composers and performers, the celebrity endorsement featured movie stars and served to bind the instrument to the culture of the movies themselves. One Fotoplayer ad, for instance, reproduced an image of Norma Phillips, an actress for Mutual, along with a reproduction of a handwritten note: 'I consider the Fotoplayer the

Figure 1.6 'Fotoplay Your Pictures', ad for Fotoplayer by American Photo Player Company (*Moving Picture World*, 1 September 1917, 1441)

most practical and sweetest toned instrument I have ever heard.'[54] Phillips' image alongside her letter was larger than the image of the instrument, making her the centrepiece of the ad. In addition, another female figure resembling Phillips was positioned in front of the Fotoplayer, apparently admiring rather than operating the instrument. The ad associated the Fotoplayer with film celebrity, and the star almost seems a stand-in for the audience.

The logic of the ad's appeal seems to be this: the audience identifies with the star; therefore, if the exhibitor chooses what the star prefers, the exhibitor will also choose what the audience prefers.

Shown in Figure 1.7, an ad for Seeburg similarly featured an endorsement by Nell Craig, an actress with Essanay. Here, the appeal was even more abstract, as the ad showed the actress holding flowers and seated in front of a Seeburg organ but turned away from it to face the camera. The ad said only that she 'is

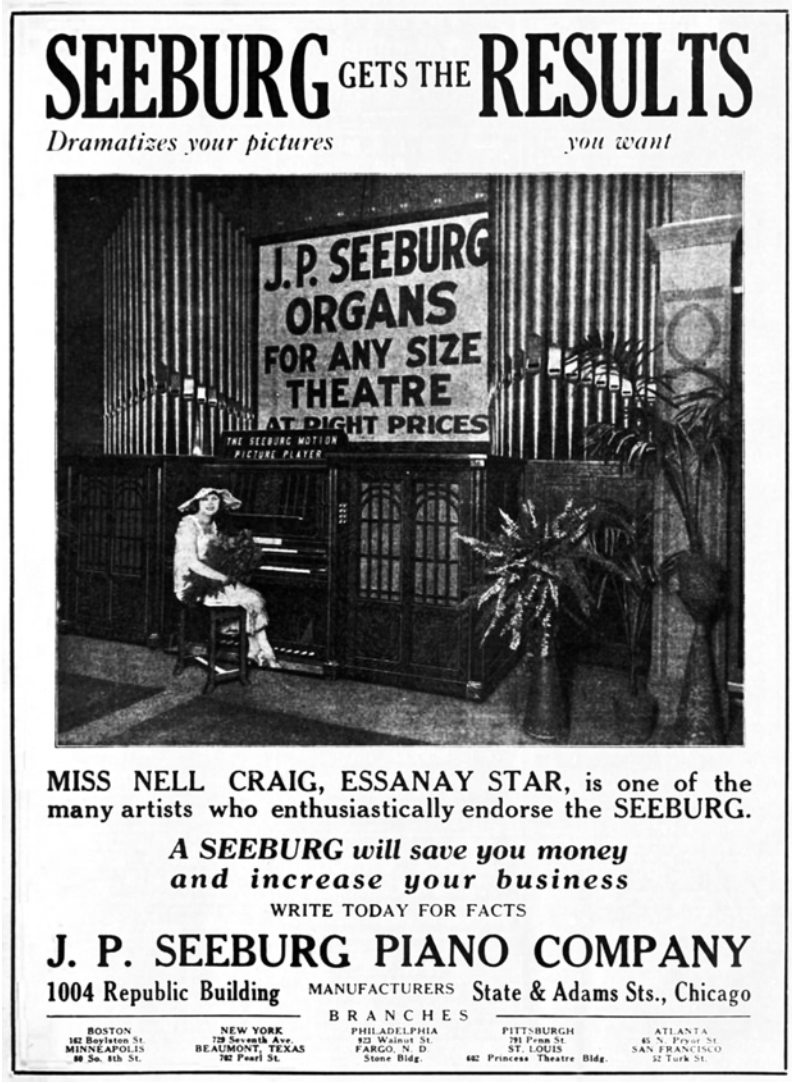

Figure 1.7 'Seeburg Gets the Results', ad for Seeburg Organs by J.P. Seeburg Piano Company (*Moving Picture World*, 2 September 1916, 1593)

one of the many artists who enthusiastically endorse the SEEBURG.'[55] While the ad presented Craig at the keyboard, the flowers made clear that she had no intention of playing it, yet placing her on the bench tied her image to the instrument, and the very proximity served to connect the star on screen with the music played by the Seeburg.

Playing the Picture

Finally, many ads emphasised the ability of the instruments to 'play the pictures', that is, to synchronise music to the action on film. A recurring tag line of Wurlitzer instruments was 'the only music that gives realism to the pictures'. Fotoplayer, whose tag line was 'all but human', answered that its instruments offered 'music that gives life to the pictures'. In both instances, the instrument added realism or life by virtue of its synchronisation to the film, not because it was playing 'good' music. (Synchronisation here referred to the general silent film practice of matching action with appropriate music, not to rolls made to accommodate specific films.)

In the 1910s, 'playing the pictures' had become an important value of motion picture theatre exhibition, and from both the emphasis placed on it in ads and from accounts in the trade papers it seems that a theatre with well-synchronised music was something audiences sought out. Companies manufacturing mechanical instruments addressed this problem in two ways.

First, they allowed musicians to play them like regular instruments with access to the colouristic supplements on the device. This basic approach led to the development of a proper theatre organ, which quickly became a staple of motion picture theatres. Here, playing the picture depended on the skill of the organist, many of whom developed national reputations for highly effective accompaniment of films.

Second, companies developed technology to facilitate semi-automatic accompaniment. This involved primarily adding a duplex piano roll system to the instrument, which allowed two rolls to be loaded onto the instrument at the same time. In addition, companies sold rolls designed especially to take advantage of the various attachments and stops for their machines. The playing of the instrument was best handled by someone who was musically knowledgeable, but some machines were designed with a control box that could be triggered remotely by 'push buttons placed in the box office or the operating booth.'[56]

Ads for the Seeburg Motion Picture Player and the Seeburg Pipe Organ Orchestra noted synchronisation as an important selling feature. For example, in an ad for the Motion Picture Player, large text announced that the instrument was 'Playing to the Pictures'.[57] A different ad for the Seeburg Pipe Organ Orchestra included a paragraph explaining, 'Music that detracts from the picture and does not harmonize with it, wrecks your program. The proper music adds to it, makes your theatre a habit.'[58]

Ads for the Fotoplayer made the case for synchronisation even more consistently. One claimed, 'it provides music befitting the action of the pictures,

changing with each scene and vividly corresponding with the picture shown,' and another enthused, 'crowning all of its artistic triumphs it offers the best in music; music that blends with every action of the picture.'[59] A third told exhibitors, 'Don't Make Mistakes With Your Music. Blend your music with your picture.'[60] A fourth added, 'The Fotoplayer is built expressly for motion pictures – therefore assuring an absolutely correct musical interpretation of screen action.'[61]

Wurlitzer also routinely emphasised the ability of its instruments to synchronise with the pictures. Figure 1.8 shows an ad for the One Man Orchestra from 1915. Its headline promised 'Dramatic Music for Your Dramas; Comic Music for Your Comedies'.[62] The ad includes a close-up of the four-roll mechanism, and the text explains that the instrument 'when played automatically, requires no attention. Four rolls play 40 selections. Rolls set to change with the action upon the screen.' When compared to most other instruments' duplex system, the four-roll mechanism helped market the instrument as allowing more diverse musical selections.

Conclusion

Ads for mechanical instruments during the 1910s laid down discursive strategies for negotiating the elimination and concentration of labour. The

Figure 1.8 'Dramatic Music for Your Dramas; Comic Music for Your Comedies', ad for Wurlitzer One Man Orchestra by the Rudolf Wurlitzer Company (*Moving Picture World*, 21 August 1915, 1393)

'mighty Wurlitzer', which condensed wonder and power into a simple moniker, reminds us that these instruments have continued to fascinate through the silent era and beyond. In these instruments, the appeal to the exhibitor's amazement at being able to replace an orchestra with a single player extended to the audience, which, as in Kasson's analysis of Coney Island attractions as imaginative reworkings of industrial production into fantasy rides (e.g., the mining car into the rollercoaster), served to reconcile workers to the growing mechanisation of their labour. Through the grandiose theatre organs of 1920s picture palaces, audiences experienced and could marvel at the concentration of labour in compelling musical form. These organs, often installed in theatres that also featured large orchestras, disguised the displacement and concentration of labour in the organ both as harmless spectacle and as the celebration of the technical prowess of player and machine. But the prehistory of these organs as automatic instruments, and the explicit appeals to concentrating and eliminating labour on which they were sold, suggests this threat was more real than the staging of the 1920s picture palace would have its audiences believe. The organs' latent existential threat to labour was a hard lesson musicians would learn when theatres converted to recorded sound.

Notes

1 The claim is ubiquitous. See, for instance, Ben Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats: The Story of the Golden Age of the Movie Palace* (New York: C.N. Potter, 1961); Charles Merrell Berg, *An Investigation of the Motives for and Realization of Music to Accompany the American Silent Film* (New York: Arno Press, 1976); Q. David Bowers, *Nickelodeon Theatres and Their Music* (Vestal, NY: Vestal Press, 1986); Gillian Anderson, *Music for Silent Films, 1894–1929: A Guide* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1988); Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of the Cinema, 1907–1915* (New York: Scribner, 1990); Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915–1928* (New York: Scribner, 1990); Martin Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Ross Melnick, *American Showman: Samuel 'Roxy' Rothafel and the Birth of the Entertainment Industry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); and for a somewhat contrary view, Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

2 Quoted in 'Musicians to Fight Sound Film', *The New York Times*, 30 June 1928; reprinted in Julie Hubbert, *Celluloid Symphonies: Texts and Contexts in Film Music History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 136.

3 See 'New Musical Marvels in the Movies', *Etude* 44 (October 1926); reprinted in Hubbert, *Celluloid Symphonies*, 133–5.

4 Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: Macmillan, 1915), 191–3.

5 Ibid., 189.

6 Frederick J. Haskin, 'The Popular Nickelodeon', *Moving Picture World*, 18 January 1908, 36–37. Subsequent citations to this source will be abbreviated *MPW*.

7 Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1986), 5.

8 Allison Rebecca Wente, 'Magical Mechanics: The Player Piano in the Age of Digital Reproduction' (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2016), 138–89.

9 We also examined the following runs of *Motion Picture News* (1913–1920), *Motography* (1911–1914), and *The Nickelodeon* (1909–1911), and found the ads were largely identical.
10 Wente, 'Magical Mechanics', 9.
11 'All but human' appears in several Fotoplayer ads. See, for instance, *MPW*, 21 February 1914, 1025. 'Pleasing harmony' appears in a Fotoplayer ad, *MPW*, 16 May 1914, 1003.
12 Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 120–6.
13 *The Nickelodeon*, October 1909, front matter.
14 *MPW*, 21 February 1914, 1025.
15 *MPW*, 4 April 1914, 231.
16 *MPW*, 15 June 1912, 1055.
17 *MPW*, 12 January 1918, 291.
18 *MPW*, 4 January 1913, 77.
19 *MPW* 21 July 1917, 562, emphasis in original.
20 *MPW*, 5 October 1912, 67.
21 *MPW*, 26 September 1914, 1831.
22 *MPW*, 15 March 1913, 1148.
23 *MPW*, 14 March 1914, 1469.
24 *MPW* 23 August 1919, 1187.
25 *MPW*, 22 November 1913, 944–5.
26 *MPW*, 23 February 1918, 1158.
27 *MPW*, 19 October 1918, 387.
28 *MPW*, 24 April 1915, 629.
29 *MPW*, 2 September 1916, 1593.
30 *MPW*, 25 November 1911, 649.
31 *MPW*, 23 December 1916, 1871.
32 *MPW*, 19 December 1914, 1751.
33 *MPW*, 11 July 1914, 327.
34 John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978), 73.
35 *MPW*, 2 February 1915, 1201.
36 *MPW*, 20 February 1915, 1201.
37 *MPW*, 9 September 1911, 751.
38 *MPW*, 11 July 1914, 337.
39 *MPW*, 19 June 1915, 2006.
40 *MPW*, 5 February 1910, 172.
41 *MPW*, 19 December 1908, 505.
42 *MPW*, 7 February 1914, 721.
43 *MPW*, 21 September 1912, 1211.
44 *MPW*, 18 September 1915, 2073.
45 *MPW*, 16 October 1915, 531.
46 *MPW*, 15 May 1915, 1181.
47 *MPW*, 22 May 1915, 1339.
48 *MPW*, 8 January 1910, 34.
49 Louis Reeves Harrison, 'Jackass Music', *Moving Picture World*, 21 January 1911, 125.
50 *MPW*, 20 May 1916,1415.
51 *MPW*, 11 July 1914, 327.
52 *MPW*, 1 September 1917, 1441.
53 Wurlitzer, *MPW*, 3 July 1915, 153; Fotoplayer, *MPW*, 25 June 1916, 2283.
54 *MPW*, 12 September 1914, 1559.
55 *MPW*, 2 September 1916, 1593.

56 *MPW*, 21 August 1915, 1393.
57 *MPW*, 18 July 1914, 483.
58 *MPW*, 4 September 1915, 1729.
59 *MPW*, 21 September 1912, 1211; *MPW*, 16 September 1916, 1883.
60 *MPW*, 26 May 1917, 1331.
61 *MPW*, 2 August 1919, 729.
62 *MPW*, 21 August 1915, 1393.

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Chapter 2

Cue Sheets, Musical Suggestions, and Performance Practices for Hollywood Films, 1908–1927

Kendra Preston Leonard[1]

Between 1908 and 1927, when sound film became standard, numerous American publications for both those involved in the film industry and the general public, such as *Moving Picture World*, *Motion Picture News*, and *Exhibitors Herald*, included regular columns by cinema conductors, composers, and arrangers such as Samuel Berg, Ernst Luz, and Clarence Sinn for theatre accompanists on selecting and performing music for motion pictures. The earliest of these columns, dating from 1908, primarily argue for or against the inclusion of accompanimental music or discuss what kinds of music – classical instrumental, operatic, and/or popular – are most appropriate (or inappropriate) for the nascent art form. Later articles, however, offer suggestions: general recommendations of pieces to include in accompanying a specific film, and even full-fledged cue sheets, which provide musical references for each major scene in an individual motion picture. These led to the development of the studio-produced cue sheet, issued along with most major pictures. Yet despite claims that moving picture accompanists relied heavily on these cue sheets, archival materials suggest that they were more often used as jumping-off points for compiled scores created by accompanists, or were ignored altogether in favour of scores compiled from an accompanist's or theatre's existing music library or other resources. In this chapter, I examine the use of cue sheets found in several North American collections, demonstrating how cue sheets were actually used by accompanists at some of the largest motion picture palaces of the 1920s.

By 1908, after many film-makers moved from New York to Hollywood to avoid the control wielded over the industry by the monopolistic Motion Picture Patents Company, the cinema industry had largely decided that accompanying a motion picture with music was not only acceptable, but essential. Although debates about what kinds of music were appropriate for film lasted well into the sound era, directors, producers, critics, and performers all agreed that accompanimental music served a narrative function and assisted in establishing geographical, chronological, and other loci, both acousmatically and within the diegesis of the medium. As a result, trade magazines and studios began publishing suggestions for music to be used with particular films. The Edison

Kinetogram, the house organ for the inventor's studio, began offering columns on 'playing the picture' starting in 1909. As Martin Miller Marks has noted, the suggestions from Edison were not terribly sophisticated: the recommendations for a nine-scene film titled *How the Landlord Collected His Rent* were: '1. March, brisk; 2. Irish jig; 3. Begin with Andante, finish with Allegro; 4. Popular Air; 5. Ditto; 6. Andante with Lively at finish; 7. March (same as No. 1); 8. Plaintive; 9. Andante (Use March of No. 1).'[2] But as Julie Hubbard has written, the Kinetogram's pioneering column spurred other film companies and magazines to publish their own suggestions as well. *Film Index* and *Moving Picture World* began publishing columns in 1910.[3] There was a significant increase in the number of films for which musical suggestions (sometimes called 'musical plots') were made in trade magazines during the late 1910s and early 1920s. Such suggestions led to the development of the studio-published cue sheet. Cue sheets, which offered more specific pairings of an individual piece of music with each scene, became more detailed over time, frequently including not just titles of chosen pieces, but also musical incipits. The cue sheets of the 1920s represent the height of the form. Composers, music editors, and score compilers, including Max Winkler, Ernst Luz, and James C. Bradford, contributed to both trade magazines' musical suggestions and created stand-alone publications that were distributed by studios with their films as part of an attempt by studios to control or at least influence the musical accompaniment of their pictures.

Although such recommendations were, as Bradford had printed at the top of his cue sheets for Paramount, mere aids for music directors, 'their purpose [being] rather to illustrate the style and character of the music that fits each scene and so enable the leader to select a similar piece from his library,' the studios – which often owned the publishing companies that produced the music – heavily promoted the recommended pieces.[4] Advice columns for accompanists published in industry trade journals – written by the same composers and arrangers listed above – also advocated for the acquisition of cue sheet-referenced pieces on cinema musicians, claiming them as essential for the sophisticated cinema music library. Regarding these practices, Rick Altman writes, 'during the twenties, music directors and orchestra leaders depended heavily on cue sheets', and 'selections chosen by cue sheet compilers were guaranteed continued sales and playing time.'[5]

There is very little published documentation about exactly how and when these musical cues were used.[6] Comparisons between cue sheets and the actual music played, as described in reviews, shed some light on performance practices of the silent cinema. However, most reviews of photoplaying were written about only the largest theatres, such as the Rialto in New York, where the performers were the self-same authors of the cue sheets. Even there, however, there was clearly room for deviation from the cue sheet, as I demonstrate below. Here, I analyse the use of cue sheets and their supplantation by performer-compiled scores, arguing that while Hollywood compilers may have inspired accompanists in their choices of photoplay music, accompaniments

for studio films were highly individualised and determined by a player's own preferences and available music library. I examine archival materials belonging to three professional accompanists: cue sheets, scores, photoplay albums, sheet music, and more used by Hazel Burnett (1892–1973), located in the Josephine Burnett Collection at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin, cue sheets and scores owned by Claire H. Hamack (*c*.1898–1977), and cue sheets owned by Adele V. (Della) Sullivan (née Overbeck, *c*.1883–1964), which comprise the Silent Film Collection held by the American Music Research Center (AMRC) at the University of Colorado Boulder.

That the accompanists I name here are all women is not unusual. In 1914, the manager of a thriving silent cinema wrote that having a successful theatre often depended on being able to provide 'good music . . . furnished in the way of an accomplished [female] pianist'.[7] The job of cinema accompanist was a respectable one for women, and was compared positively with secretarial work, teaching, and nursing. The presence of a female accompanist indicated that a cinema was intent on being an artistic and moral institution, especially as the film industry worked to establish itself as a legitimate business producing respectable and creative works. Although no census of cinema accompanists was ever taken, reports from trade and industry publications suggest that while white male musicians were in the majority in the earliest days of cinema accompaniment, women, both white and of colour, soon outnumbered them. Women certainly comprised the majority of cinema accompanists after the spring of 1914, when all-male cinema orchestras were dissolved so that their members could join the military. As Ally Acker has written about women in the silent film industry, 'women are as integral and transformative to the cinema as [well-known men], and yet their stories have consistently remained untold'.[8] In an era when women were often named only as 'Miss [last name]' or 'Mrs [husband's last name]' in print, and those who wished to publish music still often had to do so under pseudonyms or with their first initials in place of their names in order to be considered seriously, only a limited number of female composers and performers were made easily identifiable or recognised for their work. The influence of these women, particularly during the Great War and its immediate aftermath, cannot be understated; as Acker continues, 'more women worked in decision-making positions in film before 1920 than at any other time in history'.[9] Acker's claim certainly includes female musicians. Women accompanists, who came from a wide variety of socio-economic strata and had equally diverse musical backgrounds and educational experiences, became the arbiters of musical taste and overall morality in movie theatres, as a place where a woman played was deemed appropriate for other women and children. Working in cinema music, women took on roles as performers, composers, inventors, and innovators within the film industry, their responsibilities often overlapping and becoming inextricably entwined. It is clear from interviews of accompanists and audience members and recent research that these musicians' performances for newsreels, animations, live-action shorts,

and feature films served in multiple ways. Their accompaniments, which used already existing music, new compositions by themselves and others, and their own improvisations, shaped and helped define the musical sensitivities of the time. Accompanists created music and approaches to using music that would become part of the audience's expectations for film music, established musical standards for film scores that would carry through into sound films, educated listeners as to different types of music and musical genres, and to musical traditions relating to affect and meaning, and demonstrated how music could serve as a narrative and interpretative force in the cinema.

Just as full scores issued by studios for films were often jettisoned for simpler and/or easier-to-play compilations, cue sheet versions, abridgements, or arrangements, cue sheets were likewise modified, used merely as the basis for ideas, or even ignored.[10] As Rodney Sauer has noted, 'Many surviving cue sheets, including the two reproduced in [Gillian] Anderson['s book] show multiple changes from the printed score pencilled in by a theatre music director.'[11] Such is the case with the cue sheets from the Burnett, Sullivan, and Hamack collections. The modular format of the cue sheet allowed for easy substitution of a performer's preferred pieces in the place of those suggested by the cue sheet compiler. In every case of cue sheets in the Burnett Collection and the Silent Film Collection at Boulder, the editor of the cue sheet appears to have made changes to incorporate repertoire they already owned and knew.

Hazel Burnett performed for both cinema and live theatre as an organist and pianist. After an early career in Ohio, she moved to Texas, where she played at the Majestic Theater in Austin and the Queen Theater and the Aztec Theatre in San Antonio. The Burnett Collection contains a wide variety of materials, including printed cue sheets and full scores, photoplay albums, sheet music, and hundreds of pieces clipped out of *The Etude* and *Melody* magazines. Much of Burnett's music is marked with performance indicia that confirm that she used it in accompanying silent film. Burnett also drew heavily on the repertoire from the stage in scoring movies.

Burnett's cue sheets are mostly unmarked and appear to have been used only as guides for her to compile her own scores, which she did using music from albums and magazines. Numerous pieces of sheet music in her collection are labelled with cue numbers and descriptive notes: Frederick Vanderpool's 'The Want of You' was used for the cue 'maw asleep' in one unidentified movie, and Edvard Grieg's popular 'Ase's Death' accompanied another unknown film's cue 27: 'Mary prostrated'. 'No. 5 Molto Agitato' from Breil's *Original Collection of Dramatic Music for Motion Picture Plays* is marked as '14 phone rings', while 'No. 6 Andante Misterioso' was used for '[Cue] 2[:] man enters'. Burnett wrote the titles of accompaniment-appropriate pieces on the covers of the photoplay albums that contained the pieces, often including the page number for quick access. She also interleaved pieces of sheet music and pieces cut from *Melody* and *The Etude* between pages of her photoplay albums to create original modular scores.

One particularly useful example for understanding Burnett's practices is her compiled score for the 1920 Paramount movie *Humoresque*. The film is a classic melodrama about a young Jewish violinist. Hugo Riesenfeld composed an original score for *Humoresque* for the film's premiere, and it was this score that was performed by a cinema orchestra and organist at its premiere and on the road tour that followed. While Burnett almost certainly had access to Riesenfeld's cue sheet, she compiled a rather different score from her own personal library while retaining two pieces recommended both by the editors of *American Organist* magazine and Riesenfeld.

In August 1920, *American Organist*, hoping to publish but not yet having secured the official cue sheet from Riesenfeld, proposed its own set of musical suggestions for *Humoresque*. 'In suggested classic organ scorings for photoplays', the anonymous author wrote:

> we shall depart from the hodge-podge method of using two or three dozen pieces, confining ourselves instead to the selection of only a few outstandingly appropriate organ numbers, and using them as motives upon which the background of the music is to be woven.[12]

The pieces chosen were:

> [Charles Marie] Widor's Andante Cantabile Af[fectuoso] (Sym. 4): illustrating the home life, its nobility of character, its pathos, its sincerity; and also these characteristics as portrayed in the hero;
>
> [William] Wolstenholme's 'The Answer': illustrating the love of her and heroine;
>
> Wolstenholme's 'The Question': illustrating the excitement and the uncertainty of the crucial situations;
>
> [Antonin] Dvorak's 'Humoresque': the piece the hero is apparently supposed to use for his greatest performances;
>
> Max Bruch's *Kol Nidre*: optional in concert before his own people; and for the Mother's devotions in the Synagogue;
>
> (Traditional: 'Eli Eli': as above).[13]

On the very next page, however, the editors of the magazine's Photoplay Department offered a slightly different set of suggested pieces, gleaned from attending a showing of the picture where Riesenfeld's compiled score had been used. Here, they re-recommended Dvorak's 'Humoresque', 'Eli Eli', and Bruch's *Kol Nidre*, but instead of the Widor and Wolstenholme pieces advised the use of Francis Dorel's 'Love Bells', Felix Mendelssohn's '*Athalia* Selection', and Cecile Chaminade's 'Serenade'.[14] In the next month's issue, there appeared responses and additions to the suggestions from August: cinema organist Rollo F. Maitland pointed out that 'Eli Eli' was not, in fact, a traditional Jewish melody, but was heavily based on 'Through the Ages' by Josiah Zuro and had been

composed for a 'Hebrew' stage play by J.K. Sandler, after which it was adapted for several dramatic productions on both stage and screen.[15] Furthermore, by this time, *American Organist* had obtained Riesenfeld's own official cue sheet for the film, which it published in full but without musical incipits, or the first few bars of the piece of music, showing the primary melody, in the issue. (For the full cue sheet, see Table 2.3 at the end of this chapter.)

In addition to the pieces listed above, Riesenfeld's selections also included several pieces from the collection *Hebrew Songs and Dances*[16] and works by Ole Bull, Paul Lacôme, and Riesenfeld himself.[17] Despite the publication of his cue sheet for the film – said to be the first of his cue sheets ever made available to 'any but his own conductors and organists'[18] – Riesenfeld made several changes to the cues even while the film played in New York, depending on the theatre in which it was shown. Such variation directed by the compiler himself suggests that he knew that his cues would ultimately serve as general guidelines rather than a fixed work to which cinema musicians would rigidly adhere. The *Musical Courier* traced the use of Riesenfeld's cues for *Humoresque*, focusing on the overture as an example of how the cue recommendations might be altered:

> When the picture was shown at the Criterion, Mr. Riesenfeld selected Dvorak's 'Humoresque' as the overture for the reason that that famous composition was ideal for the intimate orchestra at the little playhouse. Yet, when the photodrama was moved to the Rivoli Theater, Goldmark's 'Sakuntala' overture was played by the Rivoli musicians because it lent itself better for the larger group. And, when 'Humoresque' moved to the Rialto, the mallet music from Goldmark's 'Queen of Sheba' was chosen as the overture, a composition which had the Oriental atmosphere,[19] yet different from that played at the Rivoli.[20]

At other screenings of *Humoresque* at the Rivoli, Riesenfeld used an unidentified overture by Weber to introduce the film.[21] With overtures proving mutable, Riesenfeld established musical continuity through the use of the 'Jewish-sounding' 'Eli, Eli', sung by Emanuel List and Jean Booth at the premiere, and the various pieces from *25 Hebrew Songs and Dances*. The reviewer for *American Organist* praised Riesenfeld's score for its mix of 'authentic' and 'effective' music, writing, 'the Jewish music was well registered and never became tiresome'.[22]

Burnett included two of Riesenfeld's musical choices for the picture, Dvorak's 'Humoresque' and Bruch's *Kol Nidre*. Assigning credit for her use of these pieces exclusively to Riesenfeld's cue sheet is impossible; however, the titular work could hardly be avoided, and Bruch's arrangement of the traditional *Kol Nidre* was a well-known musical synonym for Jews. Nonetheless, her score has these commonalities with Riesenfeld's, even as

she replaced the remainder of Riesenfeld's suggestions. Burnett wrote out her cues and notes for accompanying the film on the inside front cover of her 1917 *Standard Student's Classic Album*, from which some of the cues were drawn, demonstrating that she created her score from music she already owned and knew.[23] She combined the music for some continuous or closely related cues, reducing the number of different works in her score and providing scene-to-scene continuity in addition to that delivered by the two main themes (Table 2.1).

Burnett also employed leitmotifs in her score in more consistent ways than Riesenfeld. While Riesenfeld uses different pieces from *25 Hebrew Songs and Dances* – not far from *American Organist*'s disdained 'hodge-podge method of using two or three dozen pieces' – each time the camera returns to the protagonist's home, enters the temple, or otherwise shows the exterior signifiers of Judaism, Burnett uses only the *Kol Nidre*; the frequency of its use is eclipsed only by 'Humoresque' itself, which she also uses far more often than Riesenfeld does. Her reiterated uses of 'Humoresque' and the *Kol Nidre* provide solid, recognisable themes for the picture, the 'motives upon which the background of the music is to be woven.' At the same time, the other pieces listed in her cue sheet (see Table 2.2) repeatedly share rhythmic and melodic gestures and key areas, contributing to a holistic and coherent score that adheres to the contemporary aesthetic of using leitmotifs as narrative devices in film scoring.

Although some of these cues may be unknown today, Burnett's albums reveal them to be popular and well-known works frequently heard in the cinema. These selections denote Burnett's familiarity with audience expectations

Table 2.1 Riesenfeld's cues 1–5 and Burnett's cues 1–5 for *Humoresque* (1920)

Cue	*Riesenfeld*	*Burnett*
1-D (Opening)	*Athalia* selections (Mendelssohn/ Fischer)	*Kol Nidri* [*sic*]
2-T 'Its Ghetto Echoing'	'Dobrydaien Dance' (No. 2 in *Hebrew Songs and Dances*/ Fischer)	'Melodie' (Huerter)
3-T 'In This'	*Hebrew Songs and Dances*, No. 21	'Blue Ribbon Caprice' (Engleman)
4-T 'While in the Tenement Above'	'Hebrew Wedding Ceremony', from 2nd mvt. of *Andante Moderato* (M. Akst/Lohr)	'In a Canoe' (Zamecnik)
5-T 'Rudolph, Come Up Here'	Same as No. 3	'June Rose' (Cadman)

Note: 'D' refers to a direction cue or action; 'T' refers to the text of an intertitle. Punctuation modernised for clarity.

Table 2.2 Hazel Burnett's cue sheet for *Humoresque* (1920)

Cued Music [meaning music appearing in the film's diegesis]: Humoresque
Humoresque-Overture
1. Kol Nidri [*sic*]
2. Melodie – Huerter
3. Blue Ribbon – Caprice-Engelmann
4. In a Canoe – Zamecnik
5. June Rose – Cadman
6. Water Lilies – St Clair
7. Humoresque – Direct cue
8. O sole mio
9. Funiculi-Funicula – Day in Venice
10. Legend of a Rose – Reynard
11. Kol Nidri – Direct cue
12. Humoresque – Direct cue
13. Hop – Reidel
14. Mood Pensive – Applefield
15. Good bye – Tosti
16. Kol Nidri – very short – in temple
17. March – bright
18. Sonata – Pathetic – Beethoven
19. Melodie – Massenet
20. Spring Song – Mendelssohn
21. Hungarian Rhapsody
22. Humoresque
Finale – March – Bright

and the extramusical associations such pieces had developed from being used to accompany stage and screen works. Jules Massenet's 'Melodie', for example, is the composer's 'Melodie-Élégie' Op. 10, No. 5 (from the composer's *Pièces de genre*; also used in his incidental music to *Les Érinnyes*) and was commonly used in cinema accompaniments to indicate sadness. F. Paolo Tosti's 'Good Bye', likewise, was a favourite of audiences around the turn of the century and included in Albert Ernst Wier's *The Ideal Home Library*, Vol. 9, published by Scribner in 1913. Other pieces, such as those by Mendelssohn and Beethoven, were commonly found in photoplay albums; works by J.S. Zamecnik and Charles Huerter were composed specifically for film accompaniment.

Many of the pieces Burnett used in her compiled score for *Humoresque* and other scores were drawn from *The Etude* magazine, which published numerous short generic or character pieces in each issue. Such works, available at a lower cost than individually published pieces of sheet music, made up an expansive library of music appropriate for playing with moving pictures. In compiling a score, Burnett often attached these pieces, cut out of the magazine, to other pieces, handwritten cue sheets, or notes indicating their place in a film score.

'Merry Hunting Party' by Emil Söchting is marked as being for 'Calamity Jane' (see Figure 2.1); other pieces Burnett clipped out of *The Etude* to use in accompanying include Frank H. Grey's 'Shadow Land', Carl Wilhelm Kern's 'España (Bolero)', and hundreds more. Other materials in the Burnett Collection suggest that while Burnett may have taken inspiration from, or adopted, a few musical suggestions from cue sheets, her accompanimental practices did not make much use of the music advised by them. Thus, audiences in Ohio and Texas who experienced her cinematic accompaniments would have heard her original musical interpretations of Hollywood films, and not those proposed by studio cue compilers.

The AMRC's Silent Film Collection contains heavily modified cue sheets that are, in effect, modular scores like Burnett's in which a few elements of the cue sheet may be retained, but the bulk of the music is replaced by pieces in the accompanist's library. Materials owned by accompanist Claire H. Hamack include 58 cue sheets both with and without musical incipits by various compilers and from all of the major Hollywood studios, many of them annotated by Hamack. Hamack's studio-issued cue sheet for the 1925 United Artists film *Stella Dallas* (directed by Henry King), for example, lacks incipits but does list cue number, length of cue, title or dialogue cue, piece title and composer name, and colour according to Ernst Luz's 'Symphonic Color Guide' for organising silent film scores, all useful information in finding an appropriate replacement from Hamack's own music library. For some of the suggestions in *Stella Dallas*, such as using 'Songs My Mother Taught Me' (Dvorak, arr. Fischer), Hamack made a check mark near the title, indicating that she had or knew the music and found it suitable. At the top of the cue sheet, though, she listed a number of other pieces to use in accompanying the film, including 'Somewhere a

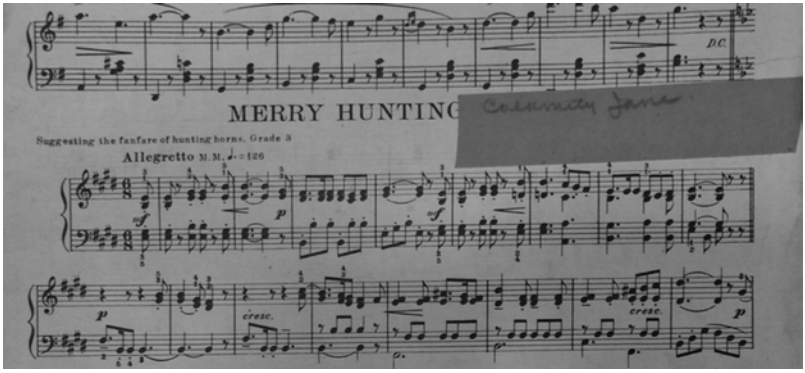

Figure 2.1 Hazel Burnett's annotation indicating that 'Merry Hunting Party' was to be used for the character of Calamity Jane in the 1915 picture *In the Days of '75 and '76*

Source: Photo by Kendra Preston Leonard.

Voice is Calling', 'I'm Drifting Back to Dreamland', Bruch's Violin Concerto, and the Andante from Tchaikovsky's Fifth Symphony. In a similar text-only cue sheet by Bradford for *When Knighthood was in Flower* (Robert G. Vignola, 1922), Hamack replaced suggested themes by William F. Peters and Massenet with Franz Schubert's 'Moment Musical', Edwin Lemare's 'Meditation', and other selections. She specifically wrote over the printed titles for cue 5, 'While Mary dreamed', changing it from 'Serenade Romantique' by Gaston Borch to 'Wakey Little Bird', and changing the music for cue 11, 'It is near to midnight', from 'Romance – German (The Conqueror)' to Grieg's 'Dawn' from *Peer Gynt*. The cue sheet for *The Dangerous Age*, a 1927 German film directed by Eugen Illés, is covered with Hamack's notes, including notation for an alternate, possibly original, theme, and indications that suggestions were replaced with other works ('In the Gloaming' is preferred over Otto Langey's 'Dream Shadows' for cue 23). Other cue sheets, including that for My *American Wife* (directed by Sam Wood, 1922), also bear short passages of handwritten notation for original themes and motifs. Hamack's audiences, like Burnett's, would have heard Hamack's musical interpretation of the film rather than that of the studio compiler (see Figure 2.2).

Hamack clearly found some of the published cue suggestions useful, and her accompaniments were hybrids of published cues and her own selections, drawn primarily from photoplay albums and sheet music. She used several pieces from the Bosworth *Loose Leaf Film Play Music Series* vol. 2, Chas. L. Johnson's *Picture Show Music*, and Emil Velazco's *Komedy Kartoons* series. The cue sheets that show evidence of being the most highly used – judging

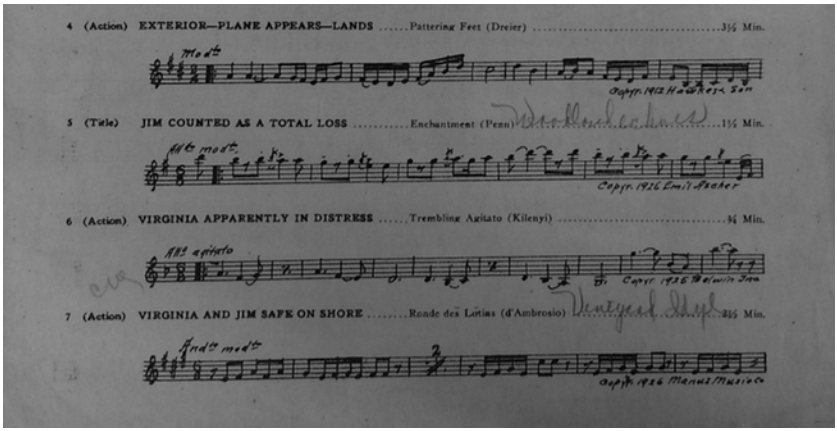

Figure 2.2 Claire Hamack's replacements for cues in *The Lodge in the Wilderness* (directed by Henry McCarty, 1926), substituting 'Woodland Echoes' for cue 5 and 'Vineyard Idyll' for cue 7

Source: Photo by Kendra Preston Leonard.

by smudges, folds, and the need for taping pages back together – are those that Hamack edited the most, reusing material as appropriate. In one case of radical repurposing, it appears that Hamack used a heavily hand-edited cue sheet issued for *Men of Steel* (directed by George Archainbaud, 1926) to accompany the silent release of *The Vagabond King* (directed by Ludwig Berger, 1930).

Many of Adele V. Sullivan's 41 cue sheets at the AMRC are seemingly unused. A few are marked with only the occasional date or whether the film for which the cue sheet was issued was a 'talker': *Halfway to Heaven* (directed by George Abbott), for example, was released in December of 1929 by Paramount with some sound dialogue, but was also issued to exhibitors with a cue sheet of incipits compiled by Bradford. But other cue sheets are, like Hamack's, heavily edited. On the cue sheet for *Modern Matrimony* (directed by Lawrence C. Windom, 1923), Sullivan replaced almost every printed cue with a new title of her own, using the cue sheet as a cue list from which she created her own modular score. She even pasted the music for her preferred love theme for the movie – Carl Kiefert's 'Song Orientale' – onto the cover of the cue sheet. Similarly, Sullivan revamped the cue sheet for *The Ten Commandments* (directed by Cecil B. DeMille, 1923); rather than using the provided incipits, she wrote in page numbers and titles from an unknown photoplay album or albums, replacing a number of the printed cues.[24] She also used Homer Grunn's *Desert Suite: Five Tone Pictures for the Piano* (1913) and selections from various Victor Herbert musicals as music for accompanying silent film. For pictures needing bugle calls, patriotic music, and military marches, she also ignored the provided cues from cue sheets, using instead 'Reveille' and short pieces from G. Martaine's 1914 Academic Edition photoplay album; she replaced other cues with generic pieces from albums published by Sam Fox, Walter Jacobs, and B.F. Wood (see Figure 2.3).

Sullivan was also responsible for synchronising the playing of records with the projection of a number of films as well, and in these cases too she often substituted her own selected recordings for the studio-specified pieces. She replaced almost every piece indicated on a typewritten cue sheet for *All at*

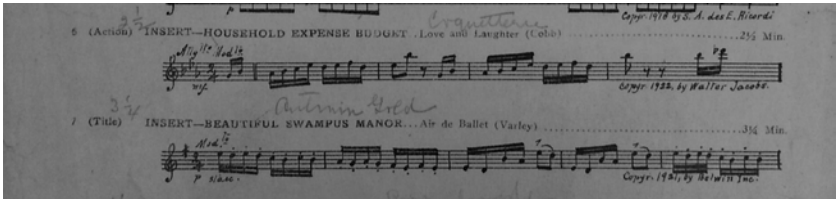

Figure 2.3 Della Sullivan's notes for substitutions for *Modern Matrimony*

Source: Photo by Kendra Preston Leonard.

Sea (directed by Alfred J. Goulding, 1929) with other works, unfortunately indicated only by Sullivan's own system of numbers and letters. It is also very likely, based on the markings on some of the recording cue sheets, that she played a live accompaniment rather than using records, relying on the recording cues as timing and genre guides.

These documents, used in major moving picture houses by professional cinema musicians, reveal that accompanists, particularly those with considerable experience and their own music libraries, made creative use of cue sheets. The accompanists' use of cue sheets aligns with Bradford's disclaimer that his suggestions did not imply that a cinema music director should 'purchase the pieces suggested nor should it be inferred that without them a good musical setting is not possible,' and refutes claims by Altman and Shana Anderson that the publications were meant to be followed precisely.[25] Furthermore, the reception of accompaniments in which studio compiler-dictated cues were replaced by other selections is almost never negative; neither reviewers nor audiences policed the use of cue sheets, suggesting that not only were performer-compiled scores unproblematic, but they were often expected. Indeed, testimony from organists such as Rosa Rio agrees that performers for silent films often used cue sheets as starting places for building a score, created compiled scores from their own libraries, and continued to improvise throughout the 1910s and 1920s, despite Anderson's claim that 'by 1920, arbitrary improvisation was unacceptable.'[26]

These artefacts of early film music history provide us with valuable, previously unexcavated information. Cinema accompanists frequently used cue sheets as tools for timing and possibly inspiration rather than actually playing from them, and accompanists playing for Hollywood films in various areas of the United States constructed personal cue sheets and modular scores based on the contents of their own music libraries. In working with their own extant libraries, accompanists probably did not have as much of an economic influence on the sales of sheet music as Altman suggests. In fact, based on the evidence of these and other edited cue sheets, accompanist-compiled scores, and the fact that cinema musicians continued to improvise (either using original leitmotifs and themes, such as Rio did, or more freely) until the adoption of integrated sound, I propose that the accompanists themselves, as opposed to the cue sheet compilers, were the primary arbiters of taste and trends in silent film music. As a result, the accompaniments for Hollywood silents were certainly far more diverse than those compiled by studio musicians, and reflected accompanists' personal tastes and those of their audiences much more closely than did generic studio-issued cue sheets. These accompanimental practices hint at a wealth of yet undiscovered musical treatments that undoubtedly influenced how silent films were received and interpreted.

Table 2.3 Hugo Riesenfeld's cue sheet for *Humoresque* (1920) (as punctuated in 'Riesenfeld's "Humoresque" Score', *American Organist*, September 1920, 332)

Cue	*Piece*
1-D (Opening)	Athalia Selections, Mendelssohn (Fischer)
2-T Its Ghetto Echoing	Dobrydzien Dance (No. 2 in Hebrew Songs and Dances) (Fischer)
3-T In This	Hebrew Songs and Dances No. 21
4-T While in the Tenement Above	Hebrew Wedding Ceremony, from 2d Mvt. of Andante Moderato, M. Askt (Lohr)
5-T Rudolf, Come Up Here	Same as No. 3.
6-D Close-up of Sick Boy	Same as No. 4
7-T Like a Little Scraggly Plant	Love Bells Intermezzo, Francis Dorel (Boosey)
8-D Boys Surround Leon	Agitato (manuscript)
9-D After the Fight when Leon Goes Away	Same as No. 7
10-D Jewish Home is Seen Again	Nos. 5, 6, and 7 of Hebrew Songs and Dances
11-T It's Come, Abraham	Same as No. 4
12-T It's like a Pain	No. 7 of Hebrew Songs and Dances
13-D Family Begins to Eat	No. 18 of Hebrew Songs and Dances
14-D Close-up of Mother After She Brings Violin	Same as No. 4
15-D Little Gina is Seen	Saeterjentens Sondag Melody, Ole Bull (Fischer)
16-D Mother Comes Home with Violin	Same as No. 4
17-D Temple Scene	Sakuntala, Goldmark (Schirmer)
18-D Boy Plays Violin	Selection from a Grieg Sonata
19-D King Gets Up	Mascarade, P. Lacome (Enoch)
20-D Moonlight, Venice	Same as No. 7
21-T When the Kantors Returned to America	Tete-a-Tete, De Koven (Schirmer)
22-T A Great Unrest had Torn	Serenade, Chaminade (Schirmer)
23-T This was Leon's Final Seal	Queen of Sheba Selections, Goldmark (Fischer) (First 14 bars of Ballet Suite, then to Lento after sign G in D flat, as arranged by Hugo Riesenfeld and published by Schirmer)

(continued)

Table 2.3 (continued)

Cue	*Piece*
24-D Sol Guinsberg and Daughter	Schumann Suite Selections
25-D (Pause, and then) as he takes up Violin	Kol Nidre, Bruch (Jungnickel) 4 bars also at sign A (Schirmer)
26-D He Stops Playing	Organ*
27-D He Starts Playing	Humoresque, Dvorak
28-D He Finishes Playing	Organ
29-T He Takes up Violin	Humoresque, Dvorak
30-D (The remainder of the picture)	Organ

Note: * According to *American Organist*, 'The organist replaced the orchestra at No. 26 and finished the picture, the respective players being at liberty to arrange their own scores, following the materials already scored by Mr. Riesenfeld for the main portions of the picture.'

Notes

1 My thanks to Jonathan Mummolo and Rachel Barker-Asto for their assistance in locating and providing archival materials for this essay.
2 Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 68.
3 Julie Hubbert, *Celluloid Symphonies: Texts and Contexts in Film Music History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 7.
4 Bradford's cue sheets for Paramount stated: 'The purpose of this musical setting is to aid the leader in selecting appropriate music for the picture. It is not intended that he should purchase the pieces suggested nor should it be inferred that without them a good musical setting is not possible. Their purpose is rather to illustrate the style and character of the music that fits each scene and so enable to leader to select a similar piece from his library.'
5 Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia Press: 2004), 353–4.
6 One exception is Marco Targa, 'The Use of Cue Sheets in Italian Silent Cinema: Contexts, Repertoires, Praxis', in *The Sounds of Silent Films*, ed. Claus Tieber and Anna Windisch (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 49–65.
7 Anon., *Motion Picture Magazine*, July 1914, 102–3.
8 Ally Acker, *Reel Women: Pioneers of the Cinema, 1896 to the Present* (New York: Continuum, 1991), xvii.
9 Ibid., xviii.
10 Kendra Preston Leonard, 'Using Resources for Silent Film Music', *Fontes Artis Musicae* 63, no. 4 (October–December 2016): 274.
11 Rodney Sauer, 'Photoplay Music: A Reusable Repertory for Silent Film Scoring, 1914–1929,' *American Music Research Center Journal* 8–9 (1 January 1998): 56. The book he cites here is Gillian Anderson, *Music for Silent Films, 1894–1929: A Guide* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1988), xxx, 32.
12 'Score in Detail: *Humoresque*', *American Organist*, August 1920, 295.
13 Ibid. Modern punctuation added for clarity.
14 Ibid., 296.
15 Rollo F. Maitland, 'The Humoresque Score', *American Organist*, September 1920, 331.
16 J. Fleischmann, *25 Hebrew Songs and Dances* (New York: Fischer, 1912).
17 'Riesenfeld's "Humoresque" Score', *American Organist*, September 1920, 332.

18 Ibid.
19 Jews, Jewish topics, and Jewish customs were often referred to as 'Oriental' during this period. For more, see Ivan Davidson Kalmar and Derek Penslar, eds., *Orientalism and the Jews* (Boston, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2004).
20 'Films Must Be Artistically Introduced', *The Music Magazine-Musical Courier* 81, 16 September 1920, 36, 39.
21 'Reel Life at the Riesenfeld Houses', *Columbia Daily Spectator*, 19 July 1920, 3, accessed 13 July 2016, http://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/cgi-bin/columbia?a=d&d=cs19200719-01.2.22.
22 'Photoplay Reviews: Rialto – New York', *American Organist*, September 1920, 332.
23 *Standard Student's Classic Album* (Philadelphia, PA: Theodore Presser, 1917).
24 Marginalia suggests that Sullivan used at least one album published by Belwin; other pieces included the 'Pilgrim March' by Frederick Scotson Clark and 'Love's Old Sweet Song' by James Lynam Molloy.
25 Shana Anderson, 'Ideal Performance Practice for Silent Film: An Overview of How-To Manuals and Cue Sheet Music Accompaniment from the 1910s–1920s' (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2013, abstract); and Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 371.
26 Anderson, 'Ideal Performance Practice'.

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Chapter 3

Sing Them Again

Audience Singing in Silent Film

Malcolm Cook

The huge success in 2013 of Disney's *Frozen* (Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee), and especially the popularity of the hit song 'Let It Go', has seen a renewed interest in cinema singing, with special sing-along CD and DVD releases, sing-along screenings, and *Frozen* sing-along theme park presentations. These recent flurries of interest in sing-alongs are part of a much longer historical tradition. The Prince Charles Cinema in London has regularly presented interactive screenings of *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965) and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975), and this lineage might be further extended to include television shows such as *Sing Along with Mitch* (NBC, 1961–1964) or the 1930s animated 'Screen Songs' series from the Fleischer studio. Indeed, as this chapter will demonstrate, cinema singing was an important part of early moving image performances from the outset and throughout the silent period. This practice served as an important crucible for debates about the status of cinema, its audiences and their behaviour, and the incorporation of musical accompaniment and technology into this new art form. Through close attention to this early history, we can better understand the specific, if heterogeneous and changing, musical practices of the silent period. Furthermore, this discussion also indicates the wider principles at stake in thinking about the audience singing that has been a constant, though often unacknowledged, part of moving image history.

Illustrated Songs and the Nickelodeon

The importance of illustrated songs in nickelodeons and the involvement of audiences in singing along with them has been highlighted by a number of writers, including Richard Abel and Rick Altman.[1] Illustrated songs involved the projection of magic lantern slides depicting scenes from the lyrics of recent popular songs with the aim of promoting them. A professional local singer and musicians would typically accompany these, and the final slide featured the written lyrics of the song chorus and the audience were encouraged to join in.

Two characteristics of the illustrated songs are central to the volume of attention they have received relative to later audience singing. First, as Altman indicates, their origins in vaudeville, continued reliance upon magic lantern slides,

and local musical performance connections all indicate the fundamentally multimedia experience of the nickelodeons.[2] Illustrated songs were, in many cases, the primary attraction of the nickelodeon, countering histories that see these venues as the first dedicated film exhibition venues. Second, in their direct address and eliciting of an affective, embodied response from the audience, illustrated songs can be situated within Tom Gunning's 'cinema of attractions'.[3] This is by no means an absolute correlation, however, as many song slides did feature a form of narrative.[4] Likewise, Abel sees this entertainment as a kind of 'innovative nostalgia', not wholly embracing the modernity that Gunning sees as central to the form of early cinema.[5]

The decline of illustrated songs, and the nickelodeon venues that supported them, around 1913–1914, thus provides a neat fit with wider accounts of cinema history of this time: the emergence of the narrative feature as the dominant form and the subordination of attraction and spectacle to it; the construction of dedicated film exhibition venues and a move away from intermedial performance spaces and technologies such as the magic lantern; the shift from unruly, vocal, and predominantly working-class audiences to an appeal to refined higher-class audiences and behaviours; and the abandonment of local musical variations and difference in favour of standardisation and centralisation of musical accompaniment practices.

Many of the elements of this narrative of the decline of illustrated songs are in keeping with widely accepted patterns of the film industry in the early and silent period and can be supported by primary sources from the period. A 1922 advertisement promoting a revival of a decade-old Mary Pickford film marks the differences between the presentation of films in 1910 and the (ideal) presentation in 1922, saying 'don't forget an illustrated song. To bring out the old-time atmosphere use slides as unconnected with the words of the song as possible'.[6] This advertisement may be understood as an attempt to discipline exhibitors and establish an ideal practice, rather than reflecting routine exhibition habits. Nevertheless, illustrated songs are portrayed as anachronistic, suggesting cinema singing and audience participation were no longer common.

In describing broad historical shifts and distinct periods, such an account misses the value of detailed and historically specific research into individual developments that may run counter to prevailing trends. The continuation, and even growth, of cinema singing in the latter half of the 1910s and into the 1920s provides one such case study. A number of writers have already examined particular examples of cinema singing in the late 1920s that will be addressed in the conclusion, yet there was substantial activity throughout the intervening decade that will be examined here.[7] We will look in detail at two examples of film series that promoted cinema singing: Imperial's 'Animated Songs' series from 1914, and Educational's 'Sing Them Again' series from 1923 to 1925. These will be considered alongside the wider community singing movement that is a crucial cultural context for the continuity of cinema singing throughout this period.

Animated Songs

For Altman, the appearance of the Imperial Motion Picture Company's 'Animated Song' film series in 1914 constitutes merely a last-gasp abortive attempt to revivify the moribund illustrated song in the face of the structural changes described above.[8] Altman is undoubtedly correct that this series did not have the reach or longevity of song slides. It survived little more than two years between its first appearance in April 1914 and the disappearance of advertising in late 1915, if we assume the films may have continued to circulate for a short while after production ended.[9] Likewise, *Billboard* was dismissive of them, saying 'this venture is old'.[10] Nevertheless, the series would appear to have had some impact and success with sales across the whole of the US.[11] More importantly for the present discussion, the series marks a number of variations and departures from illustrated songs that would also be important to later cinema singing developments.

Like illustrated song slides, the 'Animated Songs' from Imperial started out using recent popular songs, suggesting they had similarly close connections with music publishing. The first release was 'In the Heart of the City That Has No Heart' (Joseph Daly and Thos. S Allen, 1913) based on the song published by Daly Music Publisher, Boston.[12] A number of other recent songs also published by Daly were included in early editions of the series, and it seems probable that this was no mere coincidence and that there was a formal relationship between the two companies. However, it was not exclusive, as a number of other recent popular songs from other publishers were also included in the series.[13]

The 'Animated Songs' did not just use popular songs; there is evidence that they increasingly moved away from them. The series started to feature long-established songs such as 'Home, Sweet Home' (Henry Bishop and John Howard Payne, 1823) and 'Silver Threads Among the Gold' (H.P. Danks and Eben E. Rexford, 1873). In August 1914, Imperial announced they would no longer use songs from other publishers 'owing to a demand by them for a royalty on all numbers'.[14] Self-published songs, or traditional songs not subject to copyright, held an obvious economic appeal. Equally, the structural changes Altman describes, with declining sales of sheet music and an increase in phonograph recording sales leading to a greater consumption of music, rather than participation, may be considered a factor here.[15] Yet the move away from recently published songs can also be seen as a reflection of increasing scorn for popular music and its performance as part of illustrated songs. As early as 1909, a *Moving Picture World* article suggested that 'the illustrated song had driven the good singers from the stage' and described a crisis in the use of illustrated songs.[16] A January 1914 item in the same trade paper blamed the decline of illustrated songs on their 'deterioration' due to the 'cheap "mush stuff"' they featured.[17] In this context, claims by Imperial that their 'Animated Songs' would 'create a new class of patron [. . .] appealing as nothing else can to their

artistic and dramatic instincts' at the same time that they moved away from recent popular music can be seen as a concerted effort to raise the prestige and artistic content of the beleaguered sing-along.[18]

The second notable, and related, characteristic of Imperial's 'Animated Songs' is the distinct anti-modern, or perhaps more appropriately 'ambimodern', attitude they project.[19] Ben Singer's term aims to move beyond the binaries of debates around 'modernity' and acknowledge 'the kinds of paradoxes and ambiguities that make nominally anti-modern lines of thought ineluctably modern'.[20] Discussions of the 'modernity' of early cinema have been both extensive and contentious over the past 30 years. Describing large-scale social, technological, and economic transformations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under that single term has become common, but may itself be challenged as too reductive. Furthermore, there is disagreement over the extent to which early cinema can be explained as being similar to, being part of, or being a product of that modernity.[21] The importance of these issues to the current study is that Imperial's 'Animated Songs', and many of the examples of cinema singing that followed, are not straightforwardly explained by either side of this debate. Rather, commensurate with Abel's description of illustrated songs' 'innovative nostalgia', cinema singing seems to hold an ambivalent position that Singer's term helps express.[22]

As suggested earlier, sing-along films' direct address to the audience and encouragement of an active, embodied response places them firmly within the 'cinema of attractions'. Equally, the first of Imperial's series, 'In the Heart of the City That Has No Heart', is clearly a product of the modern music publishing business, with the commensurate mass reproduction and standardisation that entailed. Indeed, by 1914, the animated song may well have served to promote Harry Burr's phonograph recording as much as the sheet music. 'Animated Songs' replaced the magic lantern slides of earlier sing-alongs with moving images, suggesting an inexorable progression of technology characteristic of modernity. Yet in contrast to these qualities, the advertising for the series explicitly rejected modern technology, stating 'this is not a phonographic arrangement' and that there is 'nothing mechanical' about them.[23] As indicated earlier, while the first entries in the series did promote popular songs, later instalments moved away from this to include traditional music. Finally, while Imperial's series can be described as fulfilling the attraction of early cinema, it appeared in 1914, when narrative cinema was ascendant, and its use of direct address could be seen as outmoded. This sing-along series would seem to be simultaneously both modern and anti-modern.

'In the Heart of the City That Has no Heart' captures that ambivalence. The idea of 'the city' has become central to the theorisation of modernity, from its origins in the work of Charles Baudelaire and Georg Simmel to more recent discussions.[24] The song clearly derives its appeal from the city, evident not only in its title, but also in the cover of the sheet music, which depicts a well-dressed woman against a backdrop of a busy urban space with tall buildings

and streetcars passing. While the rush of the city is evident in this image it is hardly overwhelming, and the woman may be considered a *flâneuse*, her scale relative to the city in the background allowing her to survey the space from a detached position.[25] The song itself, however, is a cautionary tale of the city's vice, delivered as an old-fashioned ballad rather than an unequivocal celebration. Later songs in the series would continue in this direction, increasingly adopting a nostalgic tone in choosing long-established or traditional songs with themes of remembering, such as 'Annie Laurie' and 'When You and I Were Young, Maggie'.

While the 'Animated Songs' may not have achieved the level of success of illustrated song slides, they serve as a significant example of the continuation of cinema singing. They equally indicate the ways in which this practice could be adapted over time. The ambimodernity of the 'Animated Songs' presaged the more substantial impact of the community singing movement in the US, which would see further inflections on the role of singing in cinemas and stimulate new film series.

Community Singing

In a previous publication, I discussed the importance of the British community singing movement to the rise of sing-along films in the mid-1920s, with there being a strong correlation between the dates of peak activity in both.[26] In relation to the focus on the United States in this chapter, there is a less defined chronology and a more dispersed range of activities. In Britain, a single figure (Gibson Young) and a single newspaper (the *Daily Express*) were able to rapidly establish a coherent cultural movement between 1925 and 1926, based in London but with reach into the provinces. In contrast, in the US, there was a much longer process with a number of parallel centres of activity and leading figures. Esther Morgan-Ellis suggests the seed of the American community singing movement can be traced to the early years of the twentieth century, leading to the efforts of the Music Supervisors National Conference (MSNC) at their conference in 1913 to publish *18 Songs for Community Singing*.[27] Nevertheless, the US entry into the First World War stimulated this nascent movement into a substantial cultural influence, as both Morgan-Ellis' research and period accounts attest.[28]

Within the cinema industry, community singing became an area of increasing interest in 1917, prior to the official entry of the United States into the war. A *Moving Picture World* article in March 1917 titled 'Can Picture Shows Use Community Song?' noted the huge popularity of singing events in Buffalo organised by one of the leaders of the movement, Harry H. Barnhart.[29] The article suggested this would be an ideal activity for exhibitors to offer, emphasising the economic benefits in attracting crowds, in contrast to the benevolent musical and social improvement aims of the MSNC. As wartime concerns increased, the patriotic, musical, and local value of community singing for

exhibitors became more important. An influential 1918 entry in George W. Beynon's 'Music for the Picture' column in *Moving Picture World* titled 'Let's Sing!' highlights all of these areas, but continued to note that there is 'box office value that cannot be overlooked'.[30]

There is evidence of substantial growth in cinema singing stimulated by the community singing movement during and after the war. Motion picture theatres from New York to Milwaukee to San Francisco reported the popularity of this activity with audiences.[31] The *Exhibitors Herald* indicated that 200 theatres in Chicago, half of those in the region, were featuring community singing as part of their regular programme by October 1918.[32] Following the end of the war, the popularity of community singing in cinemas might be expected to have declined, and certainly some commentators of the time saw it as merely a 'fad' or 'current craze',[33] yet a 1920 *Motion Picture News* article promoting the value of music as a way to bring prestige to theatres suggested that over 12 million people took part in community singing in 1919 and advocated continued presentation of it by exhibitors.[34]

Like the 'Animated Songs' series, community singing offered an ambiguous or ambivalent response to modernity. The initial movement was one rooted in ideas of community and nation, and a desire to maintain musical proficiency. A number of cinema singing events emphasised their distance from the associations of the earlier illustrated songs, such as a Detroit theatre that advertised the absence of 'paid leaders, song pluggers, or anything of a professional or commercial nature'.[35] The repertoire of songs used was intentionally restricted, both to a small number of frequently repeated titles and to particular kinds of songs with defined musical or social value. A 1920 community singing handbook suggests around 100 song titles in 13 categories. These included songs that had featured in the 'Animated Songs' film series and would later appear in the 'Sing them Again' film series discussed below. These included folk songs and ballads such as 'Annie Laurie', 'When You and I Were Young, Maggie', and 'Home, Sweet Home', as well as patriotic or wartime songs such as 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'.[36] The repetitive reuse of such a small repertoire was in part a reflection of the practical need to ensure audience familiarity, as leading thousands of people in singing an unknown song would be a daunting prospect. Yet it also reflected the distance being actively sought between this new movement and the popular music that was central to illustrated songs. At the same time, the role of modern technology in supporting the movement was evident. A number of articles point towards the role of the phonograph, player piano, and radio as stimulating musical education, with *Motion Picture News* arguing the phonograph had 'awakened people to an interest in music'.[37] Links with music publishers remained crucial for many exhibitors and the community singing movement was in some cases co-opted into this.[38]

The community singing movement had a substantial cultural impact, including the continuation of singing within cinemas, stimulating this activity at precisely the time the illustrated song had declined. While the basic

idea of cinema singing remained constant, there was a fundamental shift in the aims, repertoire, and relationship with modernity. This would in turn stimulate the production of new sing-along films, particularly the 'Sing Them Again' series produced by Educational.

Sing Them Again

The 'Sing Them Again' series was launched by Educational in August 1923.[39] Educational specialised in short subjects, an area that continued to exploit cinema's intermedial roots and used attraction and spectacle for their appeal. The 'Sing Them Again' series was part of a promotional effort to reassert the importance of the short film as part of the film programme with their tagline 'The Spice of the Program' and advertisements attacking the length of narrative features, a move that was praised in fan publication *Motion Picture Magazine*.[40]

As the title 'Sing Them Again' suggests, the series explicitly aimed to evoke a nostalgic and old-fashioned response from the audience. Each release featured three 'old-time melodies' visualised with 'appropriate motion-picture themes partly serious and partly humorous in spirit'.[41] The first release, titled 'Close Harmony', is typical, showcasing the songs 'Sweet Rosie O'Grady' (Maude Nugent, 1896), 'In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree' (Harry Williams and Egbert Van Alstyne, 1905), and 'Sweet Adeline' (Richard H. Gerard and Harry Armstrong, 1903).[42] While only the final selection was explicitly listed in the 1920 *Community Song* book, the former two songs, with their nostalgic and old-country feel, clearly belong to the ballad category that made up a significant part of the community singing repertoire.[43] Later releases followed a similar pattern and would consistently include at least one song strongly associated with the wider community singing movement, including 'Silver Threads Among the Gold', 'My Old Kentucky Home', 'Old Black Joe', 'Home, Sweet Home', 'Juanita', 'Mother Machree', 'Auld Lang Syne', 'Love's Old Sweet Song', and 'Annie Laurie'.[44]

The connection with community singing was not only implicitly made by adhering to the repertoire or categories of the movement's songbooks, but was also explicitly evoked in advertising and trade press discussion. An early advertisement described the series as 'A Great New Novelty in One Reel That Will Bring Community Singing to Your Theatre'.[45] Trade paper *Motion Picture News* suggested the series would 'take advantage of the present demand for community singing that exists in almost every city in the United States'.[46] Likewise, the series was seen to 'stimulate community singing' when presented in Philadelphia, and in New York the 'one-reelers bring community singing into the theatres'.[47]

Educational provided complete orchestra and piano scores for the series, 'for the musical accompaniment is naturally the most vital factor in the presentation'.[48] Nevertheless, as was characteristic of silent film accompaniment of the period, the musical component of the 'Sing Them Again' films was

Figure 3.1 Educational advertisement for 'Sing Them Again' from *Motion Picture News*, 5 April 1924, 1491

ultimately the responsibility of the exhibitor and their musical director – a variety of approaches was used in presenting them. The importance of a 'capable leader' to encourage the audience and bring them together was frequently noted in press reviews as central to the successful screening of this series.[49] As a result, using these films to support community singing events that involved

star musical leaders was one approach to presenting them. The Strand Theatre in Seattle employed John Henry Lyons, 'the irresistible song leader', as an attraction in connection with the 'Sing Them Again' film, and Lyons would continue to appear in conjunction with the films throughout 1924 across the Northwestern US.[50]

Educational encouraged close links with community singing events, aiming to work with the 'co-operation of various musical societies throughout the country'.[51] For instance, they supplied films for the Kentucky Home Coming celebrations in June 1924. Educational estimated, with typical promotional hyperbole, that more than 200,000 exiles would return to the state and participate with locals in community concerts using their films.[52] The April release 'Heart Throbs', which featured 'My Old Kentucky Home', was undoubtedly timed to capitalise on this tie-in.[53] In Philadelphia, where the 'Sing Them Again' films were produced, a coordinated week of events in a number of film theatres aimed to 'stimulate community singing'.[54] This was probably inspired by similar 'Music Week' efforts within community singing organisations, culminating in the establishment of a National Music Week in 1924.[55] The association of community singing with the First World War, and especially its use as a tool by the army for recreation and discipline, was acknowledged not only in song selections such as 'Comrades' or 'Tenting Tonight', but also in the sale of the films to the army.[56] In 1924, Educational reported they had contracted for the first series of 12 'Sing Them Again' films to be distributed to 106 army camps, a continuation of the wartime practice of community singing for the purposes of 'raising their morale'.[57]

Like the earlier 'Animated Songs' film series and the ongoing community-singing movement, the 'Sing Them Again' films evince a distinctly ambimodern attitude, encapsulated in advertisements from Educational that described them as a 'Modernized Revival of the Songs You Used to Sing' (see Figure 3.1).[58] These films were a product of modernity, yet ambivalent towards it, nostalgic for the aesthetic and political values of an earlier period that were then co-opted for new purposes in new contexts. While, as suggested earlier, the city is often taken as the archetypal modern environment, 'Sing Them Again' was in some respects concerned with turning away from downtown towards either an imagined pastoral idyll or, more commonly, a localised urban neighbourhood, anticipating the 'local outreach' of community cinema singing after 1925 that Morgan-Ellis has uncovered.[59]

In addition, it is also worth noting here the diversity of audiences for sing-alongs in terms of gender and ethnicity. Lauren Rabinovitz has discussed the way illustrated songs in nickelodeons could provide a space for female audiences and performers, while Shelley Stamp indicates that the popularity of serials in the 1910s was sometimes bolstered by communal sing-alongs for tie-in songs.[60] In these cases, the sing-along would seem to contribute to establishing the modern 'new woman'. The 'Sing Then Again' series also offered a commentary on this new social development. In its second edition 'Companions', the songs were illustrated with a depiction of:

> ancient and modern methods of putting a baby to sleep. The modern mother no longer sings to her offspring. She turns on the radio, encloses her darling in a barrel-like crib that is revolved by electricity and goes out for a stroll.[61]

This should not be taken as a suggestion that sing-alongs appealed only to female audiences or were entirely progressive in their representation. One review suggests 'in afternoon shows in which the audience is made up chiefly of women it is very doubtful if there would be any spontaneous response'.[62] In another example, the film titles indicate the song was for 'married men only, and a sub-title warns the men folks beforehand: "Don't let her stop you!"'. This film depicted a reversal of traditional roles that showed 'the master of the house washing the dishes while wifey lounges in the parlor with the latest bestseller and a box of bonbons'.[63] In the absence of the films themselves, which are not known to have survived, these descriptions suggest the films could be received in different ways by different audiences. The sale of the 'Sing Them Again' films to the army indicates they were not seen as exclusively for a female audience, but they were clearly offering representations that might be interpreted in either progressive or reactionary ways.

A similar situation exists in terms of songs with national or ethnic associations. Titles such as 'Juanita', 'Mother Machree', and 'Annie Laurie' were generally popular, but would have had special appeal for particular audiences, especially for local theatres with a regular audience of that ethnicity or nationality. To adequately understand and address these variations in audiences for sing-alongs requires localised research of specific case studies, of the kind Judith Thissen has recently undertaken, but which is beyond the scope of this survey chapter.[64]

The repertoire of songs selected for the 'Sing Them Again' films was another area in which an ambivalence to modern forms was expressed. We have already seen how the series drew heavily upon the community singing songbook, using long-standing traditional songs and those with reminiscence and nostalgia as an explicit theme. These were not selected in isolation; rather, they were in contrast to jazz. 'Jazz' in such accounts was amorphous, at a time when the music and its terminology were only just emerging. 'Jazz' thus served as an emblem for modernity rather than a clearly defined musical idiom. This contrast with jazz can be seen most clearly in a number of reports of a 1923 survey conducted by several radio stations that claimed to have polled 100,000 listeners. The survey reported that over 70 per cent of their audience had 'a preference for the old melodies and appreciation for the chance to sing them again' over 'modern jazz'.[65] Beyond the scepticism that must be applied to the results of an unreliable poll being used for publicity purposes by Educational, these results again indicate the ambimodern ideas bound up with cinema singing in this period. The results of the poll indicate that the appeal of the 'Sing

Them Again' films was understood as being tied to nostalgia for the past, yet this was being communicated through the new technology of radio.

The 'Sing Them Again' series did not survive long enough to be challenged by the arrival of synchronised sound or 'the talkies' in the second half of the 1920s. The series had an initially mixed reception, with *Billboard* dismissing one entry as 'sentimental', while others saw them as 'pleasurable' or 'knockout as entertainment'.[66] Within a few months, the series was reported as a 'big success' by Educational, and as a result production was renewed in 1924.[67] The films would seem to have had considerable longevity, perhaps due to being well suited to repetition, unlike narrative features. Early entries continued to be listed as available long after their release, and they were still being presented into 1925 after production had ceased.[68] Nevertheless, Educational quietly dropped the series for the 1925–1926 season, a decision the *Harvard Business Reports* suggests would have been made based on exhibitors' enthusiasm for the subject and anticipated competition from other sources.[69]

Conclusion

The cessation of the 'Sing Them Again' series did not mark the end of cinema singing. On the contrary, the continued popularity of community singing was evident in the launch of a National Music Week in 1924.[70] Morgan-Ellis has also shown how organist-led community singing remained an important part of many cinema programmes, albeit rarely using films as part of the presentation.[71] More immediately, the launch of the Fleischer 'Song Car-Tune' series in 1924 may have contributed to Educational's decision to exit this field. Although touted as 'a new idea in song reels' and 'something really extraordinary', the series was simply a refinement of the existing model, with the primary innovation being the use of an animated 'bouncing ball' to indicate on-screen lyrics rather than using pictorial representation of the themes of the song, as 'Sing Them Again' had.[72] Daniel Goldmark has discussed these films in detail and points towards the importance of their relationship with music publishing, given the direct involvement of songwriter Charles K. Harris in their production.[73] While the appearance of recent songs in the repertoire may indicate an initial return to the model used in illustrated songs in earlier decades, the Fleischer series also started to feature a number of very familiar songs associated with community singing. These included 'Sweet Adeline', 'Old Black Joe', 'My Old Kentucky Home', and 'Pack Up Your Troubles'.[74] These appeared in 1926 when the Fleischer studio was collaborating with Lee de Forest and incorporating his Phonofilm synchronised sound technology. Here, sing-along films were used to negotiate the way this new technology would be integrated into cinema, a pattern also repeated in Britain.[75] Thus, the Fleischer song films can be seen as a continuation of the concerns seen in earlier cinema singing, torn between the modernity of new technology and a nostalgia for older or imagined traditions. Renamed as 'Screen Songs'

in 1929 when Paramount and the Fleischers adopted synchronised sound for every release, this series would see audience singing continue into the sound period and find a second life on television in the 1950s, the audience always ready to sing them again.[76]

Notes

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3 Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', in *Early Cinema: Space – Frame – Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: BFI, 1990).
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5 Abel, 'Illustrated Songs', 311.
6 *Universal Weekly*, 1 July 1922, 34.
7 Malcolm Cook, 'Animating the Audience: Singalong Films in Britain in the 1920s', in *The Sounds of the Silents in Britain: Voice, Music and Sound in Early Cinema Exhibition*, ed. Annette Davison and Julie Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Daniel Goldmark, 'Before *Willie*: Reconsidering Music and the Animated Cartoon of the 1920s', in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007); Esther M. Morgan-Ellis, 'Edward Meikel and Community Singing in a Neighborhood Picture Palace, 1925–1929', *American Music* 2 (2014).
8 Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 190.
9 *Variety*, 17 April 1914, 27; *Variety*, 3 December 1915, 28.
10 *Billboard*, 23 May 1914, 17.
11 *Variety*, 8 May 1914, 21; *Motion Picture News* (hereafter *MPN*), 2 May 1914, 44; *Variety*, 25 December 1914, 158.
12 *Variety*, 17 April 1914, 27.
13 *Variety*, 5 June 1914, 21.
14 *Variety*, 14 August 1914, 7.
15 Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 190–1.
16 *Moving Picture World* (hereafter *MPW*), 15 May 1909, 632–3.
17 *MPW*, 17 January 1914, 298.
18 *MPN*, 15 August 1914, 63.
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20 Ibid., 49.
21 Singer provides a useful list of notable contributions to this debate. Singer, 'The Ambimodernity of Early Cinema', 50n5.
22 Abel, 'Illustrated Songs', 311.
23 *Variety*, 22 May 1914, 24; *MPN*, 5 September 1914, 64.
24 Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life [1863]', in *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1965); Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life [1902–1903]', in *The Sociology of Georg*

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29 *MPW*, 24 March 1917, 1965.

30 *MPW*, 3 August 1918, 677.

31 *MPN*, 3 August 1918, 2; *MPW*, 18 May 1918, 1031.

32 *Exhibitors Herald and Motography*, 19 October 1918, 27.

33 *MPW*, 8 December 1917, 1497.

34 *MPN*, 26 June 1920, 134.

35 *Wid's Daily*, 24 September 1918, 2.

36 *Community Music: Suggestions*, 71–8.

37 *MPN*, 26 June 1920, 134.

38 *MPW*, 1 March 1919, 13.

39 *Billboard*, 25 August 1923, 57; *MPN*, 4 August 1923, 543.

40 *MPN*, 2 February 1924, 448; *Motion Picture Magazine*, July 1924, 53.

41 *MPN*, 8 September 1923, 1245.

42 *MPN*, 1 September 1923, 1004.

43 *Community Music: Suggestions*, 71–8.

44 *MPN*, 8 September 1923, 1245; *Film Daily* (hereafter *FD*) 18 November 1923, 12; *FD*, 13 April 1924, 12; *FD*, 9 December 1923, 10; *ETR*, 5 July 1924, 79; *ETR*, 19 January 1924, 26; *ETR*, 31 May 1924, 24; *Exhibitors Herald*, 12 April 1924, 16–17.

45 *MPN*, 1 September 1923, 1004.

46 *MPN*, 4 August 1923, 553.

47 *MPN*, 29 December 1923, 3001; *Exhibitors Herald*, 20 October 1923, 38.

48 *MPN*, 25 August 1923, 912.

49 *MPN*, 28 July 1923, 441; *Exhibitors Herald*, 5 April 1924, 66.

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57 *MPW*, 12 January 1924, 137; *MPN*, 12 January 1924, 152.

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Part II

The Evolution of Sound and Performance Practices

The Global Experience

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Chapter 4

'Players Must Be of a Good Class'

Women and Concert Musicians in Irish Picture Houses, 1910–1920

Denis Condon

'Good music will invariably command audience,' an unnamed writer argued in the *Irish Limelight*, Ireland's first cinema journal, in 1918, 'and in Ireland, where we have an intensely musical people, the coming of the cinema orchestra has been enormously beneficial to those whose craving for music in an easily accessible form was previously almost entirely ignored.'[1] Scholars of Irish music have also long noted the impact of the advent of the cinema orchestra on the country's wider musical culture. 'The mushroom growth of cinemas in the city from 1913 on had an adverse effect on concert attendances, resulting in a drastic decrease in the number of concerts given,' observes composer and music scholar Aloys Fleischmann of developments in Dublin. 'At first music for the films was supplied by a pianist. Then, competing with each other, the cinemas began to use instrumental combinations of up to ten players, engaging the best local soloist and even importing musicians from abroad.'[2] Although Fleischmann argues that cinema music had a negative impact on concert attendance, he acknowledges that it promoted string playing by offering career opportunities for string musicians. The *Limelight* writer also focused much of his or her article on a male soloist and a female accompanist, thereby touching on the two most remarkable features of Irish cinema music of the 1910s: the prominence in Dublin's picture houses of women musicians in the early part of the decade and of the finest concert instrumentalists in the latter part. A focus on these musicians reveals fascinating details of how films were accompanied in the 1910s.

This chapter, then, examines music in Irish picture houses in the 1910s, paying attention to the role of women and foreign-born musicians working in Dublin. Ireland's first dedicated picture houses opened in Dublin and Belfast in the late 1900s, but a boom in picture house building from 1911 saw cinema develop from a seemingly passing entertainment novelty to the country's dominant entertainment form in the 1920s. Music usually constituted part of the picture house experience, but over the course of the decade cinema music changed along with cinema itself. A century later, writing about cinema music of the 1910s presents difficulties, but it also offers unique insights into the emergence of the new cinematic medium. Music often went unmentioned,

particularly in the early part of the decade, and when it was mentioned at all, references were frequently cursory and/or in such conventionally bland formulations as the one that ended many reviews of Dublin's Rotunda Pictures: 'The Irish Ladies' String Orchestra, under the direction of Miss May Murphy, performed a choice programme of classical and up-to-date music.'[3] Indeed, this much information on the music played is rare, but when musical matters are mentioned, they frequently include references to musicians. Nevertheless, more illuminating – albeit still scattered – sources do exist. If little is known about the musicians who played in Ireland's early picture houses, some information can be gleaned from the emerging film trade press, national and regional newspapers, census returns, and the archives of such organisations as the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM). These sources are most complete for Dublin because it was the capital and base of the national press. A thriving industrial city, Belfast was more populous than Dublin in the 1910s, the 1911 census showing 386,947 people living in Belfast compared to Dublin's 304,802, and this was matched by a vibrant cinema culture.[4] However, the infrequent coverage of the city by the trade press means that it is very difficult to discern patterns in the development of Belfast's cinema music. As a result, the focus here will be on Dublin.[5]

The *Limelight* article will bear further scrutiny, but the chronology that Fleischmann offers needs to be examined first. Jon Burrows' work on music in London's early picture houses is useful in refocusing on the crucial developments before 1913. Examining the period from the late 1900s to the early 1910s, Burrows has argued that London's cinema music went through three phases:

> a reliance upon automatic machines in the very earliest years of the permanent picture theatre, followed by a growing tendency to employ human pianists, which was itself quickly succeeded by a fashion for installing miniature orchestras playing 'concert music' that was only loosely matched to film content.[6]

We will return to Burrows' point about how closely music matched film content, but a variation on these phases is discernible in Dublin. The very few picture houses that existed before 1910 employed small orchestras, frequently advertising the name of the bandleader or musical director. Dublin's most famous early picture house, the Cinematograph Volta, which was briefly managed by James Joyce, engaged a string orchestra led by Reginald Morgan, but it also possessed a Hupfeld Phonoliszt-Violina, an automatic piano-violin, albeit there is no evidence that this machine was used.[7] Once the building boom of the early 1910s began, several of the first musicians who appear in surviving sources were solo pianists, often women, and these were quickly joined by other small orchestras, the best known of which was an-all female string band, the Irish Ladies' Orchestra, and its offshoots. After 1913, as Fleischmann

Figure 4.1 Joseph Schofield demonstrating his *Method for Violoncello* (London: Lafleur, 1923)

indicates, competition between the leading picture houses pushed the number of musicians in their orchestras as high as 16, and in a further enhancement of their musical attractions the picture houses began to engage the best concert soloists not only as orchestra leaders, but also as players of separately advertised solos not linked to on-screen content.

The most detailed information on Dublin cinema music and musicians comes from the late 1910s, particularly following the launch of the *Limelight* in January 1917. The article from June 1918 referred to in the opening paragraph is particularly interesting in its indication that the management of Dublin's suburban Phibsboro Picture House employed Joseph Schofield. Schofield, the article observes, was:

> the very talented Dublin cellist, a musical prodigy who at the early age of 13 won the Baron Johann Von Knoop Scholarship at the London Guildhall School of Music, an honour which he successfully held for seven years against all comers.[8]

In a sense, Schofield's engagement by the Phibsboro Picture House demonstrates Fleischmann's point: that good music – in this case, highly accomplished instrumental playing in the Western classical tradition – was not commanding enough of an audience in concert halls to provide Schofield with sufficient income as a professional musician, even when supplemented by his role as professor of cello at the Leinster School of Music (see Figure 4.1). Therefore, since May 1916, he had been playing cello solos at Dublin cinemas, initially

at the city centre Pillar Picture House and latterly at the suburban Phibsboro. And his situation in early twentieth-century Ireland mirrored that of many other well-regarded classical musicians.

If the virtuosic soloist had come to represent the forefront of picture house music in the latter half of the 1910s, he or she, although it was almost always a man, did so by displacing from this position of prominence the women solo musicians or ensembles that had gained particular fame in the earlier part of the decade. By first favourably mentioning the woman musician Lily Fagan but then focusing at far greater length on Schofield, the *Limelight* article is emblematic of the evolving musical landscape in Dublin's picture houses. By the end of the 1910s, a cinema musician might perform one or more of several roles. Schofield was playing solos, including some of the repertoire of 40 cello solos he had composed himself, while Fagan was leading an orchestra that was 'playing to pictures, [which] embraces something more than musical accomplishments. It requires from those who would succeed that subtle instinct for utilising music in a manner that creates a favourable atmosphere for each particular phase of the picture.' This was:

> perhaps the main secret of the marked improvement being shown by the Phibsboro' Picture House Orchestra since it came under the able management of Miss Lily Fagin, a lady whose instinct in the choice of music is so unerring that, in our mind, it overshadows what are unquestionably remarkable accomplishments.

Little else is known about this phase of the career of Lily Fagan, the misspelling of her name here seemingly more than an editorial slip and becoming a sign of her partial erasure from the historical record. Not that Fagan is wholly obscure: newspaper articles show that she had received a commendation at the 1917 Feis Ceoil, the annual Irish festival of music, and in the 1920s and 1930s she would lead Lily Fagan's Ladies Orchestra and the Lily Fagan Trio, ensembles prominent at such major Irish festivals as the Royal Dublin Society's Horse Show and Spring Show, as well as on Irish radio. However, her job as the Phibsboro's musical director, which her 1911 census return shows that she took up when she was still in her late teens, is known only through this tantalisingly brief mention in the *Limelight*.[9]

Brief though it is, such examples of women working in cinema deserve attention to counter a previous neglect. The retrieval of women's roles in early cinema is similar to scholarship seeking to recover the details of the lives of previously overlooked women and other marginalised groups as Ireland commemorates between 2012 and 2022 the centenaries of the events of the revolutionary decade that saw much of the country leave the UK. Although such political developments may seem remote from a discussion of the role that music played in cinema, they materially affected cinema in a variety of ways. For instance, when certain picture houses were among the businesses

destroyed in Dublin city centre during the 1916 Easter Rising, landmark sites were cleared for the construction of the 'super cinemas' of the 1920s.[10] More directly related to cinema musicians, the use of military bands to provide accompaniment for the First World War propaganda films produced by the British and other allied governments from 1916 on demonstrated the ideological value of the identity of accompanying musicians. From an entirely different political perspective, films treating Irish historical topics from a nationalist perspective remained in circulation in Ireland for a long time and were often accompanied by popular Irish tunes. When the film *Ireland a Nation* (Macnamara, 1914) had its long-delayed Irish debut at the Rotunda in January 1917, 'Irish airs were discoursed by the orchestra while the film was being screened.'[11] The *Irish Times* noted that the 'film, which treated the rebel cause with sympathy, and the music, which included a number of Irish patriotic tunes, were received with loud and frequent applause by the audiences.'[12]

Women musicians were playing in picture houses long before these mid-1910s political events. Music was a desirable career for young women in early twentieth-century Ireland. When in 1903 the Irish women's journal *The Lady of the House* asked its readers what was their 'highest ambition to be as a woman,' 7 of the 65 respondents, a substantial proportion of those expressing ambitions outside the home, wanted to be musicians.[13] When cinema emerged at the end of the 1900s, it provided several career possibilities. Although there were some women picture house managers and jobs in ticket and refreshment sales were generally reserved for women, the largest number of skilled picture house jobs available to women were as musicians. For both men and women, these increasingly professionalised jobs required the kind of extended education available only to the middle class. The growing prestige of cinema opened up possibilities for suitably trained women of this class who needed or desired an income but were restricted from much paid work by barriers to the professions and by such nebulous controls as the discourse on respectability, which, for example, put the menial work undertaken of necessity by many working-class women beyond consideration – or at least acknowledgement. As such, the

WANTED, for the Dorset Picture Hall, Two Police Pensioners as Outside Attendants; must be smart, active, and wear uniform; also Attendant Ticket Checkers, Window Billing, etc.; a Lady Pianist will be required, one who can play for pictures; Two young Ladies for Ticket Offices and Refreshments; also an Assistant Operator, one who has a good knowledge of the work; Boys for programmes, etc. Apply, with references and lowest terms (letters only), to Manager, 23 Upper Dorset street, Dublin.

Figure 4.2 Dublin's Dorset Picture Hall's advertisement for staff in the *Irish Times*, 20 March 1911

increasing number of women cinema musicians is also an index of the increasing societal acceptability and even respectability of cinema itself, which these women were helping to foster by taking these jobs.

Eva Hickie is the first identifiable woman musician who played for pictures in Dublin. In the *Irish Times* of mid-March 1911, Dorset manager William Shanly sought 'a Lady pianist [. . .] who can play for pictures,' among other employees whose roles were also specified according to gender (see Figure 4.2). The successful woman pianist was not identified when the Dorset opened in June 1911. Although Eva Hickie may not have been the only woman pianist at the Dorset between 1911 and 1914, she was later named as at least one of them by 'Paddy,' the Ireland correspondent for the British film trade journal the *Bioscope*, whose column provides the most extensive information on Irish cinema before the appearance of the *Limelight* in 1917. 'Eva Hickie,' Paddy reported, in April 1914, 'late pianiste at the Dorset Picture Hall, Dublin, has accepted a similar position at Waterford.'[14] The 1911 census lists just one Eva Hickie: the 25-year-old head of a household of five siblings and an aged servant, all of whom were living in Phibsboro, not far from the Dorset. As the occupation field of this Eva Hickie's census form is blank, she must be added to the 979 Irish women who used the word 'music' in the description of their occupation – the vast majority of them music teachers – and the further 94 who described themselves as musicians.

Figure 4.3 The intersection of Upper Sackville (now O'Connell) Street and Great Britain (now Parnell) Street showing the Rotunda Pictures, *c.*1913

Source: Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

Despite this lack of self-definition as a musician, Hickie in many ways resembled May Murphy, the most prominent woman musician in Irish cinemas of the early 1910s. The 1911 census puts both women in their mid-twenties and heading households of siblings belonging to the Catholic middle class, for whom music constituted one of the limited choices for respectable employment. However, Murphy appears to have been the more socially secure of the two, describing herself in the census, as did 75 other women, as a professor of music. Indeed, when first mentioned by Paddy in March 1912, Murphy was leading the Irish Ladies' Orchestras at two venues operated by Ireland's most important early film exhibitor, James T. Jameson: Dublin's Rotunda and the Pavilion in Kingstown, County Dublin. The Rotunda was one of the city's most prestigious entertainment venues, having been constructed in the late eighteenth century on a central site at the top of Sackville Street as a concert hall to fund the adjacent maternity hospital, and thereby acquiring a connection with elite philanthropy. In the early 1910s, it would become a full-time picture house (see Figure 4.3). 'A potent factor in the success which attends the pictures in the Dublin Rotunda Rooms and the Kingstown Pavilion,' Paddy observed:

> is the Irish Ladies' Orchestra, under the direction of Miss Murphy. In the Rotunda there are seven instrumentalists; in Kingstown three. Combined with the crimson and white colour scheme of their dresses, their little Zouave jackets complete a picture of dainty Bohemianism. Mr Jameson is to be congratulated on securing such a permanent attraction.[15]

Although Ladies' Orchestras were a feature of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century popular culture, the visual spectacle of Murphy's Irish Ladies' Orchestra's dainty bohemianism, which would be perfectly understandable in a theatre or concert hall, seems out of place in a picture house, where the audience should surely be focusing on the screen. However, audiences were expected to notice these musicians, a fact that indicates how the live musical portion of the programme was not just invisible accompaniment, but was also a visual attraction.

Indeed, Jameson's programmes at the Rotunda were renowned for their inclusion of live variety acts with the film programme. For example, the programme for St Patrick's Day, 17 March 1913, included the films *The Shaughraun* (Kalem, 1912), *Roderick's Ride* (Selig Polyscope, 1912), *Broncho Billy and the Maid* (Essanay, 1913), *Bloomer Hurries Up* (Cines, 1913), and *Percy's Express Delivery* (1913), as well as a live act, 'eccentric comedian' Bert Earle. Shot in Ireland the previous summer and based on a popular Irish play, *The Shaughraun* was the main attraction and was accompanied by 'appropriate' but unspecified music arranged by Murphy for the Ladies' Orchestra.[16] What, if anything, Murphy had arranged to accompany the other films and Earle is not recorded.

Murphy's role as musical director at both the Rotunda and the Pavilion was short-lived. Even as Paddy was asserting the permanence of the attraction,

it was changing to offer an opportunity for another woman musician. Just a month after his announcement that Murphy was leading the two orchestras, he revealed that she had found it impossible to manage both the Rotunda and the Pavilion, located in a suburb 12 km south of the city. Thereafter, Murphy focused on the Irish Ladies' Orchestra at the Rotunda, and Jameson, 'in no way minded to cut off the musical treat which the people of the Premier Township always expected', employed a Miss D'Arcy to lead the newly renamed Pavilion Ladies' Orchestra: 'That Miss D'Arcy has succeeded in maintaining the high state of excellence for which the Pavilion has been famous in the past speaks well for her directorship and ability.'[17]

These developments were of more than local interest. Vitagraph's comic star John Bunny praised the Irish Ladies' Orchestra and outlined the kind of benefits women musicians brought to the cinema. Bunny made his remarks on a working trip to Britain in 1912, during which he visited Ireland to shoot the short comedy *Bunny Blarneyed, or The Blarney Stone* (Vitagraph, 1913). 'Women are always an immense power in the refinement of the world,' he remarked after taking in a show at the Rotunda:

> The manager who, seeking to make his show suitable for all – from the little mites up – neglects this truth is only cheating himself of ultimate end [*sic*]. An orchestra composed of women is an undeniable asset to every hall in the world.[18]

For Bunny, and for Paddy who quoted him favourably, such initiatives as the Ladies' Orchestra put cinema at the forefront of respectable entertainment by putting women at the forefront of cinema entertainment. There, they were visible signs and guarantors of a refined amusement suitable for all the family.

Although Jameson made a particular feature of his Ladies' Orchestras, other women musicians were also well known to audiences, even when they were less visible during screenings. Miss Frazer, the pianist at the Pavilion's rival Kingstown Picture House, garnered special praise for her beautiful singing during the run of *The Badminton Hunt* in January 1913, because 'she did not sing from a platform, the film was not stopped at any time. Simply you heard her charming voice coming out of the darkened stillness at the piano.'[19] Paddy also noted that May Louise O'Russ conducted the very able orchestra at the Mary Street Picture House.

For most commentators in the early 1910s, women musicians as visible signs appear to have been more important than the audible signs, the music, that one might think was their primary function. Although Dublin newspaper reviews of the Rotunda Pictures frequently included favourable comments on the Ladies' Orchestra's contribution to the entertainment, review writers did not say what they played, how much of the programme they accompanied, and whether or not they played before, between, or after the films. One exception to this was the *Dublin Evening Mail*'s 'Music and the Drama'

columnist HRW, who on occasion commented at some length on Dublin cinema music. In autumn 1913, HRW detected changes in Irish cinema music that made him or her advocate 'music of a neutral character.' He or she had recently heard this kind of music not at the Rotunda, but from the orchestra directed by Jack Larchet at the Picture House, Sackville Street. 'The music was all good,' HRW thought:

> selected from the works of Rossini, Rubinstein, Tellier, and some modern French writers. There was no effort to illustrate the picture. Mendelssohn was not dragged in to celebrate a wedding, Wagner was not requisitioned to illustrate the astronomic beauties of the heavens, nor Grieg to depict the glories of the morning. There was nothing, in fact, to disturb, but rather tranquilise, the mind.[20]

For HRW, the music was good because it *did not* illustrate what was happening on screen. It appears that Dublin picture houses were similar to London ones, where, Jon Burrows argues, the synchronisation of music with the action on the screen was not standard practice.[21] To adapt Burrows' argument, while it might have been possible for a skilled solo pianist such as Hickie to improvise suitably synchronised music for a programme of films she was seeing for the first time, it would have been very difficult, if not impossible, without significant rehearsal for a group of musicians such as Larchet's or Murphy's orchestras. As well as this, HRW was not in favour of pianists: 'I have a horror of the lady who plays ancient waltzes and barn dances – indeed to engage a dance pianist at a cinema show is a crime. Players must be of a good class.'

A few weeks later, HRW clarified that whatever their other differences, Murphy and Larchet were not attempting to synchronise the music they played to narrative action; they were playing alongside pictures rather than to them. In October 1913, he or she compared some of Larchet's and Murphy's recent selections. HRW found that Larchet's recent 'dignified' choice of Mendelssohn's *Piano Trio No. 1 in D Minor* and Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* to accompany *Hamlet* (Hepworth, 1913) exemplified the neutral music he or she believed represented the most effective accompaniment, explaining 'that the selections should be broadly in sympathy with the general character of the film.' By contrast, HRW was not pleased by Murphy's choice of songs used to accompany the factual film *The First Irish Pilgrimage to Lourdes* (General Film Supply, 1913), which Jameson had produced. The music provided by the Irish Ladies' String Orchestra was:

> not only inappropriate but it was badly played. Gounod's 'Ave Maria' was suitable enough if it had been well rehearsed, but Stephen Adam's 'Holy City' and 'The Star of Bethlehem' are not sacred songs in the real sense of the word.[22]

For HRW, the crucial differences between the orchestras were the choice of appropriate music and how competently it was played for these very different films. However, 'appropriate' meant a general suitability, and not close correspondence between particular musical themes and phrase and specific on-screen action.

Regardless of HRW's opinion, Murphy and the Irish Ladies' Orchestra continued to feature at the Rotunda until shortly after the 1916 Rising (24–29 April). Indeed, the Rising seems to have been indirectly responsible for ending Murphy's career at the Rotunda. Located at the very top of Upper Sackville Street, the Rotunda was not significantly damaged by the fighting that took place further down the street. It reopened as soon as martial law restrictions allowed on Monday 8 May 1916, with the press reporting that the Irish Ladies' Orchestra 'discourses a high-class musical programme.'[23] However, much of Lower Sackville Street was completely destroyed, including the Grand Cinema. Rather than rebuilding the Grand, proprietor William Kay entered into a management arrangement with Jameson, and after a short closure for renovations the Rotunda reopened in October 1916 under Kay's joint management and with the Grand Orchestra replacing the Ladies' Orchestra as the resident ensemble.[24] Irish picture houses continued to engage orchestras of women after the demise of the Ladies' Orchestra. In August 1920, Waterford's Broad Street Cinema advertised in the *Cork Examiner* for musicians. 'Pianist, violinist, 'cellist required,' the classified ad announced, adding '(ladies only).'[25] Nevertheless, the need for women musicians as visible signs of cinema's respectability appears to have diminished after 1913, and in 1915 the cinema soloist took over the role of promoting cinema as a high-class entertainment.

Ironically, a woman musician at the Bohemian Picture Theatre in Phibsboro appears to have initiated this development in early December 1915. 'The success attendant on the violin solos given by Miss M. Burke, a member of the Bohemian orchestra, during the performances of last week,' an *Evening Telegrap*h reviewer revealed, 'doubtless influenced the management to engage for the present week the services of Mr. Patrick Delaney, the celebrated violinist, who rendered at the 7 and 9 performances some delightful selections, which were warmly applauded by large audiences.'[26] This Miss M. Burke is likely Mary Burke, who in the 1911 census described herself as a music teacher living in the nearby suburb of Drumcondra. Regardless of Burke's musical abilities, she clearly did not command sufficient celebrity. Although the Bohemian had attracted patrons since its opening in 1914 by advertising the city's best musical attractions, consisting by 1916 of an orchestra of 16 musicians under musical director Percy Carver, it did not continue with this experiment in early 1916. Therefore, the recently opened and centrally located Carlton Cinema in Sackville Street introduced the concert soloist as a permanent feature by engaging violinist Erwin Goldwater (see Figure 4.4). The *Irish Times* described Goldwater's debut at the Carlton on St Patrick's Day 1916 as:

Figure 4.4 Portrait of Erwin Goldwater, musical director and soloist at Dublin's Carlton Cinema (*Irish Limelight*, May 1917)

Source: Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

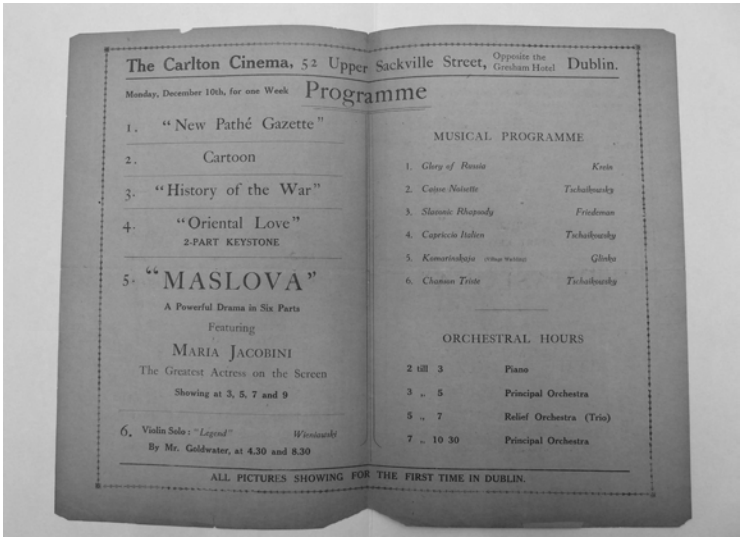
> [a] new departure in connection with cinema entertainments [that] takes the form of a violin recital by Mr. E. Goldwater, a pupil of Sevcik, and formerly first violin at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Mr. Goldwater will conduct the orchestra at the Carlton.[27]

Goldwater's appointment at the Carlton undermined the Bohemian's long-made claim that it possessed Dublin's largest and best picture house orchestra. In April, however, the Bohemian engaged Clyde Twelvetrees, concert cellist and professor of the Royal Irish Academy of Music, to play as part of its daily programme. 'Up to the present,' the *Irish Independent* commented, 'if one wanted to hear a few famed soloists one had to attend the big concerts; but now one can hear the very best at convenience.'[28]

Not to be outdone, the Pillar Picture House engaged Joseph Schofield in April 1916. It was outdone, however, when just a month later, the Bohemian

contracted a second soloist, the violinist Achille Simonetti. 'Dubliners will keenly appreciate the enterprise of the management of the Bohemian Picture Theatre in permanently engaging the services of one of the most noted violinists of the day in the person of Signor Simonetti,' the *Dublin Evening Mail* observed. 'Henceforth Signor Simonetti will act as leader of the Bohemian orchestra – which has won such a wide repute – and will give solos, as well as Mr. Clyde Twelvetrees, Ireland's greatest celloist.'[29]

Surviving programmes from Goldwater's tenure at the Carlton in the late 1910s show how the soloist added a further musical layer to the cinema bill at Dublin's most prestigious picture houses. The programme for the week of 10–17 December 1917 – when the feature was *Maslova* (Tiber, 1917), an Italian adaptation of Tolstoy's *The Resurrection* – is particularly informative because it features not only the films and music played, but also how the musicians changed during the day.[30] Between 2 p.m. and 3 p.m., a solo pianist provided music; the full orchestra took over for the first showing of *Maslova* at 3 p.m. and played until 5 p.m., when the relief orchestra, a trio, played until 7 p.m., before the main orchestra took over again until the close at 10.30 p.m. Goldwater's musical selections for *Maslova* were printed opposite the film programme. As well as this, at 4.30 p.m. and 8.30 p.m. each day, he played a violin solo, which that week was Henryk Wieniawski's *Légende* (see Figure 4.5).


The Carlton Cinema, 52 Upper Sackville Street, Opposite the Gresham Hotel Dublin.

Monday, December 10th, for one Week Programme

1. "New Pathé Gazette"
2. Cartoon
3. "History of the War"
4. "Oriental Love" 2-PART KEYSTONE
5. "MASLOVA" A Powerful Drama in Six Parts Featuring MARIA JACOBINI The Greatest Actress on the Screen Showing at 3, 5, 7 and 9
6. Violin Solo: "Legend" Wieniawski By Mr. Goldwater, at 4.30 and 8.30

MUSICAL PROGRAMME

1. Glory of Russia Krein
2. Caisse Noisette Tschaikowsky
3. Slavonic Rhapsody Friedeman
4. Capriccio Italien Tschaikowsky
5. Komarinskaja Glinka
6. Chanson Triste Tschaikowsky

ORCHESTRAL HOURS

2 till 3 Piano
3 „ 5 Principal Orchestra
5 „ 7 Relief Orchestra (Trio)
7 „ 10 30 Principal Orchestra

ALL PICTURES SHOWING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DUBLIN.

Figure 4.5 Programme for Dublin's Carlton Cinema for the week 10–15 December 1917

Source: Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

In one day at the Carlton and Dublin's other prestige picture houses in the latter half of the 1910s, a cinemagoer could experience the four kinds of playing alongside pictures that had emerged in the brief period of early cinema music. Music was played by turns by a solo pianist, a trio, a larger orchestra, and a concert soloist. If it were at all true that the Irish were an intensely musical people, as the *Limelight* claimed, then the advent of the picture house had provided them with quality music in a readily accessible form.

Notes

1 'Music and the Movies', *Irish Limelight* 2, no. 6 (1918): 4.
2 Aloys Fleischmann, 'Music and Society, 1850–1921', in *A New History of Ireland, IV: Ireland Under the Union, 1870–1921*, ed. W.E. Vaughan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 517.
3 'Living Pictures at the Rotunda', *Freeman's Journal*, 24 December 1912, 6.
4 This vibrancy is captured by an extensive local cinema history that addresses music to some extent, Tom Hughes, *How Belfast Saw the Light: A History of Belfast Cinemas* (Belfast: Hughes, 2014), 250–3.
5 This may seem a narrow focus; scholars of the new cinema history have long stressed the need to acknowledge the heterogeneity of local cinematic practices and avoid the tendency to generalise from well-researched metropolitan examples. However, very few other sources on this topic exist other than those mentioned below.
6 Jon Burrows, 'The Art of *Not* "Playing to Pictures" in British Cinemas, 1906–1914', in *The Sound of the Silents in Britain*, ed. Julie Brown and Annette Davison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 123.
7 Morgan was mentioned frequently in reviews; in ads in March 1910 (e.g., *Irish Independent*, 7 March 1910, 4), his orchestra was said to be playing music provided by the popular music publisher Francis, Day & Hunter. On the Phonoliszt-Violina, see auctioneer's ads for the sale of the first Volta's effects, *Freeman's Journal*, 15 June 1910, 12.
8 'Music and the Movies', 4.
9 National Archives of Ireland, *Census of Ireland 1901/1911 and Census Fragments and Substitutes, 1821–51*, 2007, accessed 28 December 2016, www.census.nationalarchives.ie.
10 Denis Condon, 'Temples to the Art of Cinematography: The Cinema on the Dublin Streetscape, 1910–1920', in *Visualizing Dublin: Visual Culture, Modernity and the Representation of Urban Space*, ed. Justin Carville (Bern: Lang, 2014), 133–54.
11 'Irish History Films: "Ireland a Nation" at the Rotunda', *Freeman's Journal*, 9 January 1917, 3. On the film's delayed Irish debut, see Denis Condon, *Early Irish Cinema, 1895–1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), 198–202.
12 'Rotunda Pictures', *Irish Times*, 9 January 1917, 3.
13 Stephanie Rains, 'Irish Women Freelance Writers and the Popular Press: An Army Beyond Literary Circles', *ELT* 60, no. 1 (2017): 52.
14 Paddy, 'Pictures in Ireland', *Bioscope*, 16 April 1914, 313.
15 Paddy, 'Pictures in Ireland', *Bioscope*, 14 March 1912, 759.
16 'Platform and Stage', *Irish Times*, 15 March 1913, 9.
17 Paddy, 'Pictures in Ireland', *Bioscope*, 25 April 1912, 275.
18 Paddy, 'Pictures in Ireland', *Bioscope*, 12 September 1912, 797.
19 Paddy, 'Pictures in Ireland', *Bioscope*, 30 January 1913, 329.
20 HRW, 'Music and the Drama', *Dublin Evening Mail*, 22 September 1913, 2.
21 Burrows, 'The Art of *Not* "Playing to Pictures"', 113.

22 HRW, 'Music and the Drama', *Dublin Evening Mail*, 13 October 1913, 7.
23 'Public Amusements: Rotunda', *Irish Times*, 9 May 1916, 3.
24 Paddy, 'Ireland: With Renters and Exhibitors', *Bioscope*, 19 October 1916, 319.
25 'Situations Vacant', *Cork Examiner*, 13 August 1920, 1.
26 'Bohemian', *Evening Telegraph*, 7 December 1915, 2.
27 'Platform and Stage', *Irish Times*, 18 March 1916, 7.
28 'Dublin and District', *Irish Independent*, 22 April 1916, 4.
29 'The Play's the Thing', *Dublin Evening Mail*, 10 June 1916, 6.
30 Trevor Griffiths reproduces a very similar table of orchestral hours for musicians at Edinburgh's Palace Cinema in 1916 in 'Sounding Scottish: Sound Practices and Silent Cinema in Scotland', in *The Sound of the Silents in Britain*, ed. Julie Brown and Annette Davison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 75.

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Chapter 5

Music, Gender, and the Feminisation of British Silent Cinema, 1909–1929

Laraine Porter

Introduction: The Feminisation of the Cinema Space

During the period covered by silent cinema in Britain, women music teachers consistently outnumbered men by almost four to one.[1] Music tuition was considered an acceptable career for women newly emerging into the labour market in Edwardian Britain, and these women were also able to transfer their skills into the rapidly expanding cinema music profession. Following the 1909 Cinematograph Act, cinemas were controlled, licensed, alcohol-free, relatively female-friendly, and screening films that, by 1926, critic Iris Barry described as 'made to please women'.[2] Cinema musicians were needed in large numbers, and conservative estimates suggest that 20,000 Musicians' Union (MU) members alone were playing in cinemas by the coming of sound in 1929, many of whom were women.[3] Given the numbers involved, relatively little is known about their work and practice, but testimonies from women cinema musicians offer some of the most important evidence available to us, and while cinema musicianship was viewed by many classically trained male musicians as beneath their talents, women appear to have embraced the new art form with pragmatism and taken advantage of the market for jobs that it created.

Women cinema musicians were also part of a shift towards the feminisation of the cinema space. In the 1910s the majority of the 4,500 or so cinemas in Britain were proprietor-owned and often run by husband-and-wife teams, with women closely involved in the day-to-day running and many more employed as cashiers and ushers, though the governance of the cinema trade remained dominated by men through institutions such as the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA). In his article 'Ladies of the Lamp', David R. Williams describes the ways in which from 1914, and the outbreak of the First World War, cinemas became increasingly managed or staffed by women taking the place of men called to the front. The war allowed women to enter the profession in managerial positions and to influence the culture of cinema henceforward.[4] Cinemas also aimed to attract female audiences, and offered affordable entertainment and a means of escape for working-class women

during the daytime. By 1929, surveys showed that around 60 per cent of audiences were women, and of these 60 per cent were visiting twice per week.[5] Women also influenced the cinemagoing habits of children, forcing cinema managers to create space for prams in foyers.[6] In 1931, 30 per cent of under-fives in London attended the cinema at least once per week, often accompanied by their mothers.[7]

Writing in the inaugural issue of the journal *Close Up* in 1927, Dorothy Richardson eloquently described a Monday matinee at an unnamed London cinema populated by women and their young children:

> It was a Monday and therefore a new picture. But it was also washing day, and yet the scattered audience was composed almost entirely of mothers. Their children, apart from the infants accompanying them, were at school and their husbands were at work . . . Tired women, their faces sheened with toil, and small children, penned in semi-darkness and foul air on a sunny afternoon. There was almost no talk. Many of the women sat alone, figures of weariness at rest. Watching these I took comfort. At last the world of entertainment had provided for a few pence, tea thrown in, a sanctuary for mothers, an escape from the everlasting *qui vive* into eternity on a Monday afternoon . . . But I do not forget the balm of that tide, and that simple music, nor the shining eyes and rested faces of those women.[8]

As Richardson suggests, cinema provided a low-cost form of entertainment and escapism for working-class women where they could sit with young children and take refuge from the daily grind of housework and domestic chores.

By 1931, *The Film Weekly*, acknowledging that women cinemagoers were in the majority, defined the ideal cinemagoer as a woman of discerning tastes who selected films with care, taking heed of intelligent reviews and not being swayed by 'coloured publicity material' or the 'exaggerated and distorted opinions' of the less reliable daily newspapers. Seeking out the best-appointed cinema, she would time her arrival to perfection, leave her parcels at the cloakroom, and refrain from noisily eating chocolates during the screening.[9] During the period of silent cinema in Britain, women were crucial to the business of cinema exhibition, and the employment of women musicians was part of this feminisation of the cinema space.

This chapter will now discuss the opportunities that British silent cinema provided for working women musicians from 1909 to the coming of sound between 1929 and 1931. It will examine the attitudes of the musical and cinema trade press, newspapers, and the Musicians' Union to the emerging art form of cinema music and the cultural and aesthetic divide between popular 'cinema music' and established 'concert music'. Ironically, it was cinema's outsider status, musically speaking, its alternative music practices, and perceived lower cultural value that enabled women musicians to gain a foothold into public performance. Cinema music and musicianship were considered beneath, or

outwith, the established British concert music culture, which had hitherto largely excluded women.[10] Women musicians emerging from Victorian domestic music cultures who sought to make a career in concert music in the 1910s were subject to considerable criticism and discrimination, but cinema initially escaped the attention of the music press and carried fewer preconceptions or expectations. The role of the Amalgamated Musicians' Union (AMU), which became the Musicians' Union (MU) in 1921, was crucial in providing support for its members working in cinemas, but sometimes turned against the employment of women when it decreed they were usurping jobs needed by men. But despite vilification from some quarters, and a lack of women attaining senior positions as musical directors or composers, this chapter will argue that ordinary working women were at the forefront of developing the new art form of cinema music in the silent period, which in turn set precedents for the use of film music in the sound period. Women performers also had significant agency in determining the music that they played, particularly as soloists and improvisers, in the period up until the end of the First World War, and before the wider-scale employment of largely male cinema music directors in the post-war period. Women were largely excluded from composition and music direction in mainstream music culture, and this lack became reflected in the absence of women musical directors in cinema.

Social Context

Cinema's emergence at the end of the nineteenth century coincided with tumultuous social and economic changes, particularly in gender and class relations. At the *fin de siècle*, the new woman emerged into the public sphere, following shifts in national and domestic economies and gender relationships in the Edwardian home. The mass employment of women in the burgeoning manufacturing industries and newly built factories, rather than in the private realms of domestic service, also increased their visibility. The factory gate films of Edwardian cinematographers Mitchell and Kenyon attest to the massive numbers of working women in employment, and these actuality films show thousands of ordinary people occupying the streets and participating in mass entertainment and leisure activities, from football matches to seaside promenades.[11] The working class became avid consumers of cinema, which established its populist credentials from the outset and also appealed to the relatively neglected mass market for female entertainment.[12]

The cinematograph's shift from itinerant fairground to purpose-built cinemas between 1896 and 1910 also coincided with the rise of the suffragette, and in 1914 the First World War exerted a further seismic shift in gender and social relations, with around 2 million women mobilised into jobs vacated by men called to the front. In the burgeoning cinema industries, women managed cinemas and provided musical accompaniment as part of ensembles or women's orchestras, as described above. The First World War changed everything

in British cinema, which had entered the war as a major international film-producing power and came out struggling to compete with American imports, particularly with the films of Chaplin et al., which had won the hearts and minds of the British public. Music as a profession also became overwhelmingly female during this period, and so too did the act of cinemagoing.[13]

Precursors and Pioneers

The precise origins of the combination of moving images and music are hard to pinpoint, though at the end of the nineteenth century, early itinerant cinematograph presentations often included other forms of popular entertainment such as music, singing, and performance. Women worked with the cinematograph from the start, however, and one of Britain's first itinerant showmen, William Slade, took his 21-year-old daughter Mary on tour with him as his manager in the late 1890s in what is probably the earliest evidence of a woman touring with the cinematograph.[14] This early period was dominated by the figure of the showman, but women were prominent in the fairground culture from which cinema emerged.[15] The early cinematograph shows were peripatetic walk-up affairs emerging from a combination of magic lantern exhibitions, Victorian theatrical practices, and sensationalist ghost shows at the end of the nineteenth century and spurred on by new technologies displayed at the 1896 world's fair in Islington.[16] The fairground cinematograph was a relatively democratic new art form, in which women worked alongside men in its development, largely as family members. Film pioneer Cecil Hepworth described taking his sister, Effie, a talented pianist, with him on his early cinematograph exhibition tours, for example.[17]

The practice and performance of silent cinema music became more standardised and 'respectable' with the arrival of permanent cinemas from around 1909. Purpose-built cinemas needed to attract audiences to specific sites, rather than transporting the films to them as the itinerant showmen and show-women had before. This rapid growth in cinema building also created competition for audiences, and the standard, scope, and nature of musical performance became a key factor in how cinemas competed with one another. Women seeking employment and already trained in traditionally female instruments such as piano, violin, and harp were essential to cinema's growing demand for these skills and this kind of instrumentation, which was ideal for the light classical music repertoire and tastes at this time.

Women musicians make their appearance early in extant literature and records from this period. The *AMU Journal* made its first reference to a woman cinema musician in December 1912: a Miss Lucy Hill, who was given a benefit concert after performing for four years at Smarts Pictures' Popular Picture House in Middlesbrough and described as having 'native artistic ability . . . willingness . . . and remarkable versatility.'[18] Local newspapers also

started to name individual pianists, and these were often women, such as Miss May Greaves, the 'popular and highly-skilled' pianist at Leicester's Silver Street Cinema who performed between 1912 and 1914, before being supplanted by a male music director.[19]

The establishment of permanent cinemas also forced changes to programming practices, whereby short films, actualities, newsreels, serials, and feature films were repeated throughout the day, increasing the demand for music to fill the extended programmes. Film historian Rachael Low described the way in which early cinema music was often performed by jobbing pianists working between 2 p.m. and 11 p.m., earning around 30 shillings a week and supplementing their income by doing other jobs in the mornings.[20] To some extent, the flexibility of the cinema matinee and evening programmes also suited women with family commitments, but young children also performed in cinemas, earning around 15 shillings a week. Composer William Alwyn recollected his experiences, starting out as an 11-year-old cinema flute player in 1916:

> I waited for him [the music director] outside the cinema, a small boy with a flute-case anxiously tucked under the arm, and punctually he arrived, scrubbed clean and very much alert, after his long day in the boot factory. We entered by a side door and stumbled into the auditorium . . . and here we were in a new world – a world that was to provide so much of absorbing interest for me as a composer in the future. One by one the band arrived . . . At last after much furtive tuning and whispering, we were all ready . . . and off we started on the first piece on the desk. I was just beginning to get under way when another signal from the violinist left me stranded in mid-air . . . It was a game of hare and hounds with one small terrier puffing well in the rear. The essential link in the performance was the pianist who bound this hotch-potch of music together with his rapid modulations and improvised chords.[21]

Alwyn's account gives a fascinating insight into the skills required to perform with a rapidly changing programme of films, using short sections of library music hastily composited into a full score for a range of instruments and musicians, cued by the lead violinist and pianist, an arrangement that was typical in cinemas in the 1910s.

Cinema Music as a Profession in Britain

Cinema's rapid expansion and its demand for musicians also coincided with an expansion in the study of music, particularly for women. In 1913, the combined London Royal Schools of Music examined 25,000 pupils, around 80 per cent of which were elementary pianists, over 90 per cent were girls, and a similar proportion of their teachers were women.[22] Music, either as a

domestic pursuit or as a form of employment, was becoming a female preoccupation in which women sought professional recognition through gaining diplomas, particularly for the violin, harp, cello, and piano, and although supply outstripped demand, cinema provided opportunities for young women emerging from music college. In 1915, Miss Kate Idle, Musical Director of the Trans-Atlantic Film Company, wrote in the *Musical Times* that cinemas offered good jobs for music graduates. As a female musical director, her example would have encouraged young women to consider this route.[23]

If women flourished as performers, however, they are proportionally rarer as musical directors and composers of cinema music, an enterprise that burgeoned during the 1910s and 1920s, with publishers producing regular updates of generic cinema music in what was a substantial Anglo-European and Anglo-American industry. This music, purchased from publishers by musical directors (or their cinemas), was usually in short sections of two to three minutes, designed to fit and reflect the action and meaning of particular scenes. Musical links helped to segue from one section to the next and then combined to fill entire feature films, typically of 80–90 minutes. Helpful descriptions by the publishers of how this library music might be used ranged from the generic 'Exciting/Dramatic, Tragic/Dramatic' to the more specific 'Fire and Pursuit' or the esoteric 'Country Fayres, Morris Dancing and Young Lovers'.[24] The compositing of short pieces into a full feature film score was a substantial task, particularly given that the majority of cinema music was designed for 11 to 26 separate instruments and preparation time would likely have been a day at most, with the musical director only seeing the film the day before its premiere in his or her cinema, as film prints were despatched a day or two prior to their opening night. Many cinemas were already running a full matinee and evening programme for which the musicians were already performing daily, so preparing and rehearsing a new music score for a silent feature film would have been a very rushed affair indeed, as we have seen from Alwyn's report above.

A large cache of used cinema music scores held at the Library of Birmingham shows that musical directors coveted their collection and stamped it with their names and addresses. This sheet music was the tool of their trade, and many would have invested financially in its purchase and travelled with it when they moved between cinemas. Only one woman music director, a Nellie Rennison, crops up in this male-dominated collection, and although there are no clues as to which cinemas she worked (for unlike her male counterparts, her personal stamp did not contain her address), she did amass a considerable amount of music, suggesting that hers was a substantial career.[25] Cinema music composition offered new, young composers the opportunity to have their work published, but women do not appear to have gained a foothold in this side of the profession, as evidenced by the silent cinema music collection at the Library of Birmingham and from the lists of library music published in the trade press at the time.

Silent Cinema Music and the 'Music Establishment'

While it had been fashionable among the intelligentsia to criticise the cinematograph as mass entertainment for ill-educated masses, it was increasingly difficult to ignore its ascendance and influence in popular culture. By the 1920s, cinema music was also taken more seriously by the musical establishment, particularly as cinemas were felt to be pulling audiences from opera and orchestral concerts. In 1920, *The Musical Times* (founded in 1844), published an article on the merits of cinema music in bringing musical performance to the masses. Like many critics, intellectuals, and commentators, the author, Arthur L. Salmon, could not resist denigrating cinema as an art form, particularly for its deleterious effects on children, before discussing its potential for promoting musical enjoyment. The following reflects the contradictions in many commentaries from this period:

> The taste for maudlin sentiment, worthless melodrama, unhealthy sensation, is being strengthened and confirmed . . . there is little truth of nature, no psychology, no characterisation, in the typical film-fiction of the day, which drugs and stultifies the seniors, and vitiates the juniors by scenes and ideas unfitted to their years. In these aspects the cinema may be considered disastrous . . . But in one perhaps unexpected aspect the cinema appears to be doing good work. In very many cases it is giving the opportunity of hearing good music to many who never heard good music before.[26]

Other commentators were concerned that cinema was creating fashions for popular music and schoolchildren, for whom cinema had a great appeal:

> Some of us who are interested in 'Musical Appreciation' in schools are constantly coming up against a result of the association of music with pictures . . . We observe a growing tendency to describe in terms of 'the pictures' the effect of any piece of music which has just been performed. 'It suggests cow-boys,' 'It is like a train going over a precipice,' are examples of the kind of answer one sometimes gets . . . The ultimate result of this will be that they will become absolutely incapable of appreciating *pure music* as such to the end of their days.[27]

That cinema was influencing the *perception and reception* of music is a fascinating topic, and outside the scope of this chapter, but indicates the speed at which cinema music had entered the public imagination, threatening '*pure music*'. The status of cinema music as mere background to the primary cinema image was also debated in the music press, and to some extent its 'invisibility' also allowed women to creep under the radar as performers. The most successful musical accompaniment could be considered that which did not draw

attention to itself or compete with the visual images on the screen; its role was to follow and interpret the action, underscoring the film's narrative and meaning. Music needed to harmonise with the mood, genre, story, characters, and narrative trajectory, and to help audiences relate to the film. The skilful composer and musician needed to remain one step ahead of the plot in order to signal the action and heighten the emotion, or at the very least to reflect it musically, but never to provide a counterpoint or contradict the film. This lack of 'visibility' in terms of silent cinema music meant that cinema musicians and composers rarely achieved the spotlight, despite their numerical significance, and this partly explains their anonymity as individuals in terms of historical record.[28]

Standardising Cinema Music

The first examples of cue sheets and music being recommended for specific films came from Thomas Edison's film distribution company in 1909.[29] Recommendations enabled film renters to standardise the nature and quality of music for their films, which was a boon to cinema musicians, who had little time to research and rehearse music for rapidly changing cinema programmes. Links were made between particular narrative tropes and their musical interpretation, and music became conceptualised in terms of emotional expression. D.W. Griffith's 1915 *The Birth of a Nation* is usually cited as the first film to have a full music score, composed by Griffith and Joseph Carl Breil. Meanwhile, in 1914, the British trade magazine *Kinematograph Weekly* published a manual by W. Tyacke George entitled *Playing to Pictures: A Guide for Pianists and Conductors of Motion Picture Theatres*, which claimed to be the first instruction manual in the world offering advice to cinema musicians on everything from breathing techniques to tips on appropriate music and acceptable pay scales for cinema musicians. Maintaining standards and avoiding the debasement of music by the cinema were key issues, and George's manual, while in no way elitist, warns against the use of popular 'scavenger or gutter' music, which could elicit double entendres:

> Wedded to words that are both degrading and inane . . . these catchy melodies are taking a great hold on the public. If you possibly can, select music that is good in itself, apart from any ridiculous verses or words that are capable of a double meaning.[30]

Women were also involved in devising the theoretical and practical frameworks for cinema music, and in 1920 an American woman, Edith Lang, co-authored *Musical Accompaniment of Moving Pictures*, which offered practical advice, including being alert to subtle changes in the facial expressions of actors for clues as to the direction of the narrative.[31]

The Edwardian Summer before the Outbreak of the First World War

The 1911 census indicates the scale and gender composition of the musical workforce. Of the 47,100 musicians and music teachers in England and Wales, 24,300 were women, and these formed a skilled and willing labour force ready to enter cinema music.[32] The year 1911 also saw the formation of the Society of Women Musicians, partly in response to the gender disparity in music composition, conducting, and direction.[33] Marion Scott, Ethel Smyth (who composed the suffragette anthem 'The March of the Women'), and Elisabeth Lutyens were among its members, and although the society did not concern itself directly with ordinary women musicians, it performed an important service in creating a profile in the press, lobbying parliament for the rights and recognition of women musicians, and monitoring the discrimination they faced.

In cinema music, the pioneering Baga sisters – Ena, Florence, Celeste, and Beatrice – began their careers during this period, following their father Constantine into the business. Ena Baga's biography *Bagatelle* described how she started playing as a very young girl around 1912 in Islington, London, in a career that lasted well into the 1970s.[34] Another first-hand account was from author and journalist Ursula Bloom, who in 1913 earned '30 bob a week' as a cinema musician in Harpenden before becoming a prolific writer, broadcaster, and editor of *Women's Own* magazine. Bloom's autobiographies (1933 and 1976) give first-hand accounts of conditions for women musicians just prior to the start of the First World War, when the pianist was expected to exert some measure of crowd control:

> It was the duty of the pianist to prevent, as far as she could, any disturbance and not to let the three pennies 'run away with themselves'. Whenever the tune was familiar, they started whistling gaily . . . The thing was almost to encourage them, [and] suddenly change the tune to something else, rather loudly. This had the most shattering effect![35]

Young Women and Girls

Cinema musicianship also provided employment for some of the thousands of teenage girls trained in piano or violin. To give a sense of the female labour force for music, in 1913, 90 per cent of the 25,000 candidates at the London Royal Schools of Music (the Royal College of Music and Royal Academy of Music) were girls, and a similar proportion of their teachers women.[36] Florence de Jong (née Baga) started her career aged 12 at the Regent Street Polytechnic cinema, the site of Britain's first cinematograph exhibition in 1896. Often working for lower wages and too young to join a trade union, young women and girls came into conflict with the AMU, who accused them of driving down wages and taking jobs needed by male breadwinners.

In 1913, this conflict emerged in a battle over two young girls employed at Middlesbrough's South Bank Cinema who lost their jobs following the AMU's intervention for working below union rates. The union viewed this as a major victory, but the girls, both under 18, and therefore denied AMU membership, were subsequently unable to earn their own living. An editorial entitled 'Female Labour' reflects the union's ambiguous attitude towards women musicians:

> In any number of picture shows the managers adopt the cheap and nasty policy of engaging girls and lady pianists at absurdly low rates, and the womenfolk who play the piano appear to be as stupid as the womenfolk in many other trades and professions, that is to say, they seem to be eager and willing to render service for much lower rates than the men.[37]

The AMU needed to protect the wages of cinema musicians after their hard-fought battles to secure their status and rates, but failed to acknowledge the reasons why women and girls were forced to accept lower wages in a competitive job market. The union's intransigence saw the girls replaced by two unionised male musicians, apparently receiving many congratulatory letters on its victory. But a year later, after the outbreak of war, women and girls were actively encouraged to enter the profession.

The First World War and the Mobilisation of Women into Cinema Music

Initially, war had little impact on the cinema, but as conscription took effect and more men were called to the front, women had to take on men's roles in running the cinema industry. Women were encouraged to do their patriotic duty, and the AMU, in line with government directives on the mobilisation of women, was largely supportive of them maintaining cinema businesses in the absence of men. All-women orchestras became commonplace, such as the one that opened Leicester's new Evington super-cinema in 1916.[38] Women also sung and performed in 'sacred concerts' alongside film screenings on Sundays; including religious or patriotic content allowed cinemas to bypass Sunday trading laws and to increase their profits. The appropriately named Miss Lettie Nourish sang 'Abide with Me' and 'Land of Hope and Glory' after a screening of *The White Lady* at the Evington Cinema for the Kitchener Fund in 1917, for example, and there are many references in local histories to women vocalists performing in cinemas.[39]

The war also created limited opportunities for women to exert their creative agency as musical directors. Minnie Davis, the wife of Israel Davis and founder of the London-based Electric Pavilion cinemas, was a successful cinema entrepreneur and musician in her own right. Davis compiled music for feature films during the war, for which her daughter Rita 'played valiantly

on the violin'.[40] Davis successfully ran her husband's cinemas and later ran two orchestras at their Marble Arch Pavilion cinema following her acclaimed music composition for Chaplin's *Shoulder Arms* in 1918.[41] Detailed local cinema histories provide invaluable information on cinema musicianship. We learn that in Aberdeen, for example, women were relatively prominent, with Jose Squire commanding the Electric Cinema's five-piece ensemble in 1919 and Miss Nan King directing an operatic accompaniment to the silent film version of *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1923.[42] In Leicester's Picture House, Winifred Cockrill's twice-nightly harp solos were described as 'almost as big an attraction as the pictures.'[43]

Women were not always supported and encouraged by other women, however. Edith M. Reed, Associate of the Royal College of Organists, writing in 1916, argued that women had 'inefficient breath control' to play wind instruments and made a weaker tone in the string section, reassuring male musicians that 'no manager will discharge a man ineligible for war service in favour of a woman unless the man is unfit for his musical duties as well as his military.'[44] War undoubtedly took its toll on domestic and professional gender relations, but despite the loss of male musicians to the front, there was an oversupply of musicians willing to fill the gaps, and many of these were non-unionised women. A major dispute between the AMU and Stoll Cinemas had begun in 1912 and dragged on for several years, with striking male musicians replaced by women.[45] As competition for jobs increased, a distorted sense of patriotism prompted Hilda Thompson from *The Clarion* to write:

> I view with wonder and admiration, the work, pluck and endurance displayed by my sex during this terrible two years of war . . . But if the outcome of all this is to be that women will take the place of men on strike, then I would rather that every one of us should be killed by the Germans.[46]

After the war, when men returned home, women were required to vacate their jobs in favour of male breadwinners. Those who resisted were vilified, particularly by the AMU, while the Society of Women Musicians campaigned against the sacking of entire women's orchestras and the dismissal of the Hallé Orchestra's women members in 1920.[47]

The 1920s and the Arrival of Jazz

Despite post-war disruption to female employment, the tide of women entering the profession continued to increase. By 1921, there were 23,000 music teachers in Britain, of which 17,500 were women. By 1931, even following the arrival of sound cinema, this rose to a total of 25,000 music teachers, of which 19,500 were women, suggesting that women were still entering the profession at proportionally higher rates, but now they would no longer find employment in cinemas as they had previously.[48] Meanwhile, in the mid-1920s,

cinema and the music it generated entered a golden age. Opulent city centre picture palaces seating 2,000 to 3,000 were springing up, and these too increased the demand for music to fill their massive aural spaces. No longer could big cinemas rely on solo piano and violinist, and orchestras of up to 50 players became the norm.

By 1920, Hollywood cinema and American music had a stranglehold on British screens, with films that reflected the speed of change in modern society – fast-paced comedies, risqué sex dramas, and adventure narratives. Gangster films and westerns featuring iconic Hollywood stars and the alluring figure of the flapper captured the imagination, and cinema music needed to reflect these trends with faster, jazz-based, wind and percussive scores. Women had been discouraged from learning wind and percussion instruments, and despite a handful of 'ladies jazz orchestras', the performance of jazz was considered inappropriate and unladylike.[49] Additionally, it was argued in the music press that 'Women syncopators also appear to lack originality and creative ability. In addition they fail to shine as orchestrators or composers', attitudes that further marginalised them from contemporary jazz-based cinema music.[50]

The Coming of Sound and the End of It All

Sound arrived in American cinemas from 1926 and spread rapidly from 1927, prompted by the massive success of Warner Bros.' *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) and *The Singing Fool* (Lloyd Bacon, 1928). The pace was slower in Britain, however, due to lack of confidence in the future of the 'talkies', fears of Americanisation, and various patent wars around the new technology that pitted Britain and Europe against the mighty American company Western Electric. But by 1929, after a phoney war lasting for two years, synchronised sound cinema became inevitable. Cinema musician Gwen Berry, who wrote a diary about the demise of cinema musicians from 1928, described how, in a double blow, cinema orchestras and musicians' salaries were reduced to help pay for the installation of the new sound systems. In April 1929, Berry writes of a visit to watch *The Singing Fool* 'to hear to what extent the talkies are going to crush the poor little musician.'[51] Threats to musicians from the gramophone and radio both predated the threat from talking pictures, with the MU prohibiting its members from taking part in any 'mechanical music' recording from the early 1920s.

In August 1929, Berry recorded a fight between the cinema manager and the musical director, who was summarily fired. As the talkies tightened their grip, redundancy loomed, with news of entire London West End orchestras being given a fortnight's notice, with little prospect of re-employment. Sound technology arrived in the bigger cinemas first, but by early 1930 had spread to regional cinemas, often with mixed technical success. It was common for the rapidly installed systems to break down, or audiences to boycott poor-quality sound films, offering vain hope for musicians. Berry's diary entry for March

1930 would have resonated with cinema musicians everywhere, however: 'The sack! It's finally come at last! 2½ years I've been there. Quite enough too. But will there be anything else?'

Conclusion

The first three decades of British cinema helped democratise live music performance across gender, class, and cultural lines, bringing together a range of tastes, styles, and performers from different backgrounds and creating substantial opportunities for women. Cinema also exposed popular audiences to a wider repertoire of live music on a regular basis, from Beethoven and Wagner to popular and jazz-influenced cinema music. Women musicians, prepared to overcome cultural prejudice and negotiate the gap between their classical training and the demands of cinema performance, benefited from the jobs on offer. The confluence of the First World War with the explosion in cinema building opened a window of opportunity for creative female agency, as women moved into the industry in substantial numbers. Though this agency was curtailed somewhat with the arrival of male musical directors from around 1914, these pioneer women played a major role in inventing the vocabulary of cinema music as we understand it today.

Notes

1 Cyril Ehrlich, *The Music Profession in Britain since the Eighteenth Century: A Social History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 193. Ehrlich quotes from the 1921 and 1931 censuses, where 76–78 per cent of professional music teachers were women, mostly working independently and without a trade union.
2 Iris Barry, *Let's Go to the Movies* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1926), 6.
3 *Musicians' Union Report and Journal*, April 1930: 9.
4 David R. Williams, 'Ladies of the Lamp: The Employment of Women in the British Film Trade during World War I', *Film History* 9, no. 1 (1997): 116.
5 Nicholas Hiley, '"Let's Go to the Pictures": The British Cinema Audience in the 1920s and 1930s', *Journal of British Popular Film* 2 (1999): 46–7.
6 Williams, 'Ladies of the Lamp', 189–90.
7 Hiley, 'Let's Go to the Pictures', 47.
8 Dorothy Richardson, 'Continuous Performance', *Close Up* 1 (July 1927): 35–6.
9 Douglas Lumsden, 'Is This Your Idea of the Perfect Filmgoer', *The Film Weekly*, 11 July 1931, 11.
10 For a discussion on prejudices around women professional musicians, see Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 156–61.
11 See Vanessa Toulmin, *The Electric Edwardians: The Films of Mitchell and Kenyon* (London: BFI/Palgrave, 2006).
12 Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 195.
13 Ibid., 235.
14 I am indebted to Patricia Cooke, who researched William and Mary Slade for her unpublished PhD dissertation, 'William Slade's Photo-Electric Marvel: Touring Film Exhibition in Late Victorian Britain' (PhD diss., Birkbeck, University of London, 2016).

15 See Toulmin, *The Electric Edwardians*.
16 See the National Fairground and Circus Archive at the University of Sheffield, accessed 22 October 2017, www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/researchandarticles/bioscope-shows.
17 Cecil M. Hepworth, *Came the Dawn: Memories of a Film Pioneer* (London: Phoenix House, 1951), 31.
18 *Amalgamated Musicians' Union Journal*, December 1912, 8.
19 David R. Williams, *Cinema in Leicester 1896–1931* (Loughborough: Heart of Albion Press, 1993), 102.
20 Roger Manvell and John Huntley, *The Technique of Film Music* (London: Focal Press, 1957), 18.
21 Ibid., 19.
22 The Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music. See Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 119.
23 Kate Idle, 'Pianists and the Cinema', *Musical Times*, 1 May 1915, 230.
24 See collection of silent cinema music held at the Library of Birmingham in Special Collections, which includes around 850 pieces, of which only two appear to be composed by women.
25 Library of Birmingham Silent Cinema Music Collection, Box 41, PQR.
26 Arthur L. Salmon, *Musical Times*, December 1920, 803–4.
27 A. Forbes-Milne, *Musical Times*, 1 February 1921, 120, my emphasis.
28 See Neil Brand, "The View from the Pit: British Silent Cinema and the Coming of Sound', in *The Routledge Companion to British Cinema History*, ed. Ian Hunter, Laraine Porter, and Justin Smith (London: Routledge, 2017).
29 Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (London: BFI, 1987), 18.
30 W. Tyacke George, *Playing to Pictures: A Guide for Pianists and Conductors of Motion Picture Theatres* (London: Kinematograph Weekly, 1914), 11.
31 Edith Lang and George West, *Musical Accompaniment of Moving Pictures* (Boston, MA: Boston Music Company, 1920).
32 Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 235.
33 The Royal College of Music Library holds papers relating to the Society of Women Musicians. Also see Sophie Fuller, 'The Society of Women Musicians', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London: Macmillan, 2001).
34 Tony Moss, *Bagatelle: Queens of the Keyboard* (Sutton: Keytone, 1993).
35 Ursula Bloom, *Life Is No Fairytale* (London: Robert Hale, 1976), 65.
36 Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 119.
37 *Amalgamated Musicians' Union Journal*, September 1913, 11.
38 Williams, *Cinema in Leicester*, 121.
39 Ibid., 126.
40 Allen Eyles, 'The Autobiographical Notes of Alfred Davis, Showman', in *Picture House* 30, no. 6 (London: Cinema Theatre Association, 2005), 5.
41 Ibid., 6.
42 Michael Thomson, *Silver Screen in the Silver City: A History of Cinemas in Aberdeen, 1896–1987* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), 134.
43 Williams, *Cinema in Leicester*, 110.
44 Williams, 'Ladies of the Lamp', 123.
45 For a fuller account of the role of the AMU during the war, see John Williamson and Martin Cloonan, *Players' Work Time: A History of the British Musicians' Union, 1893–2013* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 36–59.
46 Hilda Thompson, *Amalgamated Musicians' Union Monthly Report and Journal*, December 1916.

47 See Ethel Smyth, 'Women in Music', *The Observer*, 12 December 1920, in which she complains that women who stepped in to fill orchestras during the war were being dismissed in favour of male musicians, despite the quality of the women's playing.
48 Ehrlich, *The Music Profession*, 193.
49 Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 67.
50 'Where the Fair Sex Fails', *Melody Maker and British Metronome*, April 1928, 369.
51 Gwen Berry's diary is available at http://originals.neilbrand.com/memories.html.

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Part III

Synchronisation and Scoring

Historical Practices

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Chapter 6

Music's Role in the Development of the 'Mute' Feature Film

Ben Hur and *Wings*

Gillian B. Anderson

Why an Essay on 'Mute' Feature Film Scores

In this chapter, within the context of the development of the 'mute' feature, I give two examples of orchestral 'mute' film accompaniments. The first is William Axt and David Mendoza's score for *Ben Hur* (Fred Niblo, 1925),[1] the second J.S. Zamecnik's for *Wings* (William A Wellman, 1927),[2] two stories set at a distance from one another of 1,900 years. Each was voted the best film of the year, and for their premieres as well as subsequent road shows they used an orchestra of from 26 to 40 pieces with sound effects. I have purposefully chosen orchestral scores that were composed as well as compiled, because I have found that pre-existing sources function just as well as original music.[3] These scores, as I hope to demonstrate, function in contrast to those of a decade earlier, notably Joseph Breil's composition for D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and Hugo Riesenfeld's arrangement of Bizet's *Carmen* for the DeMille *Carmen* (1915).

By focusing on the way they were constructed and on how they did or did not further each drama, I want to highlight how the music functioned and to emphasise that 'mute' film scores were not a kind of dinosaur that had nothing in common with the music that followed nor much to do with the development of the moving pictures themselves.[4] The scores were closely synchronised to the motion picture;[5] they captured the tempo and mood of each scene; they were expressive, clarified scenic structure, defined characters, and with many implicit synchronisations glued the music to the moving images, just as today's film scores do. Because they were closely tied to their dramas, these old orchestral scores gave *Ben Hur* and *Wings* even greater power and force, something for which they have not been given sufficient credit.

I base my observations and conclusions on screenings of the films with actual orchestral performances of the reconstructed original scores.[6] Although this experience cannot be construed as 'evidence' exactly, it emphasises the considerably different perspective and conclusions that arise when one actually hears the original orchestral music in conjunction with a screening of the film, an experience that is absent from the writing on the history of mute cinema.

Starting around 1911, by using all the new techniques that made more complex and expressive storytelling possible, the multireel moving picture feature played an increasingly important role in the development of movie exhibition and the moving picture itself. A feature, by definition the '*pièce de résistance* of every exhibitor's program,'[7] was sometimes given an exceptional treatment and exploitation. It often included an orchestral score and an extensive road show, initially in legitimate theatres but increasingly in deluxe movie palaces with an orchestra pit.

In the teens, the number of orchestras increased, replacing the more usual piano and drums. Exhibitors wanted an orchestra because it appealed to the higher classes of patron, and undoubtedly it submerged the audience in its sound, and therefore the motion picture it accompanied, increasingly important as the features grew in length. As a result of all this development, featured moving pictures were often among the most popular of the year.[8] The existence of an orchestral score was a sign of a film's importance and, by implication, of its influence. The fact that many other forms of accompaniment existed at the same time should not continue to be used as an excuse for minimising this one. With the feature film's development came an increasing awareness that motion pictures were a subset of pantomime, which depended upon synchronised music as an equal partner.[9]

While 'mute' feature films were probably presented in less than ideal circumstances in many places, a deluxe treatment was practised in moving picture palaces across the US; the orchestras even broadcast on the radio, and this deluxe treatment established a standard that influenced ordinary accompaniment practices and carried over into the recorded sound era. It was a foundation for what followed, and therefore it merits our attention.

In the scholarly literature (particularly recently), musical accompaniments for mute motion pictures have been acknowledged, even as the major attraction for over 40 per cent of moviegoers at the time, but still in a certain way mute film music has been marginalised.[10] Many of the measures designed in the teens to make an audience dependent on moviegoing have been described, but the use of music to submerge the audience in a drama has gone unremarked, as has music's contribution to the development of the feature film. Also missing is recognition of music's function in providing a transforming 'finish' to a film, or the internalisation of the variety show format into actual film accompaniments. It is important to reiterate 'mute' film music's role in making a story more effective, and this is what I want to explore further in this chapter.

Synopses of *Ben Hur* and *Wings*

The two films are very different, both in story and in the rationale for the disposition of original and pre-existing music. In *Ben Hur*, the story of Christ's birth and death is intertwined with that of the hero, Ben Hur (Ramon

Novarro), a wealthy Jew, and his girlfriend Esther (May McAvoy). Ben Hur wins the famous chariot race against his enemy, Messala (Francis X. Bushman). The race uses many cameras, and this 6′21″ (or 7′44″) version of the race is thrilling.[11] He reunites with his mother and sister, whose leprosy is cured by Christ on his way to the cross. They take hope from his crucifixion, resurrection, and promise to come again.

By comparison, *Wings* is the story of the friendship between two First World War American pilots, Jack (Charles 'Buddy' Rogers) and David (Richard Arlen), and their relationships with their girlfriends Mary (Clara Bow) and Sylvia (Jobyna Ralston) and their comic sidekick Herman Schwimpf (El Brendel). There are many spectacular ground and aerial battle sequences in France and scenes of the fliers letting off steam at the Folies Bergère in Paris. David is shot down behind the German lines. He manages to steal a German plane, but on his way back to the American side he is shot down by Jack, who has to go to ask David's parents' forgiveness and to give them their son's medal of honour and his good luck bear. *Wings* won the first Academy Award for Outstanding Picture as well as for Best Engineering Effects.

The Music

The musical accompaniments for these two moving pictures reflect their stories and also the different choices made by the composer/compilers. In 1925, Axt and Mendoza had the challenge of conjuring a Roman-occupied Jerusalem from the birth to the death of Christ, an ancient, exotic, oriental world. Originally a novel, *Ben Hur* had been made into a popular play whose chariot race (featuring a treadmill and real horses) was a wonder of famous theatrical stagecraft. For the motion picture, Axt and Mendoza might have used what passed for Greek, Roman, and Hebrew music of the early Christian period.[12] Instead, they chose to evoke General Lew Wallace's original story with something more familiar, a Christian-flavoured operatic idiom that for their contemporaries had already evoked a religious drama associated closely with holy figures or the Holy Land.[13] By so doing, they took advantage of the already present grand heroic themes, mysterious string tremolos, and dramatic musical codes used to conjure a religious story. Axt and Mendoza assigned their major themes to this pre-existing material. With newly composed music instead, they accompanied the non-religious scenes: the rowing on the galley, the torture of Esther's father, the chariot race and the leper colony, for example, creating music in strikingly modernistic contrast to the pre-existing nineteenth-century operatic language of Nouguès, Massenet, and Wagner. The pre-existing operatic music functioned in the film the same way it had in the operas, suggesting that the Axt-Mendoza team knew the operatic repertory extremely well[14] and chose the appropriate pre-existing music for their themes, based on how that music had functioned in the opera.[15] In the end, their choices brought

this ancient story home, and at the same time endowed it with an epic and moral proportion.

By comparison, in 1927, aeroplanes were a fairly recent innovation, as was their first use in battle only a decade earlier. For *Wings*, Zamecnik could conjure his own times with a saxophone-inflected dance-band-style orchestration that broadcast to everyone that this American drama was located in the present and expressed America's energy and optimism. He composed his own themes, which helped to define each of the figures in the drama (and made you want to dance to some of them). He dotted his original work with well-known, rousing French and American songs, Sousa marches, incidental photoplay music such as Becce's *Battle's Tumult-Blaze*, his own pre-existing photoplay music, and reduced orchestra versions of such popular classics as Liszt's *Les Préludes* and Mendelssohn's fairy music from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[16] The result was an incredibly diverse, energetic, foot-tapping, patriotic melange or potpourri that continually surprised and entertained, but also carried the drama and was deeply stirring.

Since the beginning, the role of music in film exhibition had been rather like that in a variety show. The *Wings* score was an example of the incorporation of this variety show concept into the accompaniment itself.[17] Both orchestral scores were considered part of the films' attraction and were acknowledged as influential in the films' reception.[18]

Duration

The score for *Ben Hur* has 145 rehearsal numbers, and *Wings* 180, and the scenes as well as the music change on average every 20 to 30 seconds for 2 hours and 10 minutes and 2 hours and 30 minutes, respectively.[19] The initiation of a new musical number coincides with the beginning of a new scene, thus defining its beginning and the end of the previous scene. The number of seconds that has to be covered with the accompaniment is of primary importance. This element – duration – is shared by the feature film accompaniments of any era. Regardless of differences in the stories, composers and compilers first approach their task of setting music to feature films with stopwatch (or equivalent) in hand. Next, they establish the tempo and mood necessary to cover the duration of each scene. Only then do they start to compose the music. For the 'mute' film era, the scores and cue sheets present evidence of these priorities as do other documents.[20]

Tempo and Implicit Synchronisations

The tempo within a scene was set by catching the rhythm in it: animals' movements (horses parading, bulls pawing the earth), changes in facial muscles or expressions (shyness, flirting), actors' gestures (soldiers marching,

actors punching each other, etc.), perhaps even the cutting between shots. The correct tempo enabled the creation of many implicit synchronisation points between the music and the motions within the frames. In this way, a two-dimensional image could attach to a sound that came through three-dimensional space, and thereby the image could assume increased depth, weight, and authenticity.

In *Ben Hur*, for example, the obsessively repetitive rhythms in Axt's original music capture the rowing of the galley slaves,[21] and his music for the chariot race (Rehearsal #118) reflects the frantic galloping of the horses that are pulling the chariots, undoubtedly supplemented by the sounds of horses' hoofs, whips, and carriage crashes.[22] In *Wings*, the back and forth motion of a swing (Rehearsal #10), the dizzying effect of the flight simulators (Rehearsal #27), or troops marching, for example, are picked up in the music. Zamecnik also uses musical mimicry to glue the music to the image; for example, when Jack and David laugh at Herman (Rehearsal #32), the music imitates their laughter. It can even suggest that a lot is happening on screen when it actually isn't. The music's rapid motion increases the perception that long shots of battlefields are fuller of activity than they actually are.

Sometimes, however, the opportunity to capture this coordination between image and music has to be realised by the use of *rubato* in the actual performance, the slowing down or speeding up of the music to 'stay' with the changes of facial expression and body language on the screen (Rehearsal #21 – during the scene between Ben Hur and Esther when they are falling in love, for example). These examples are just a few of the many in both scores, and this use of implicit synchronisations is as present today as it was during the mute film era.[23] There are also a number of explicit synchronisations – the chariot crash in *Ben Hur*, for example, or punches or aeroplane crashes in the *Wings* score or the playing of a snatch of the 'Star Spangled Banner' every time Herman displays the American flag on the biceps of his right arm.

Original and Pre-Existing Works

Ben Hur has 28 works by 21 different composers (14 composers plus 7 unidentified). *Wings* uses 74 compositions by 50 different composers.[24] The difference in this regard between the two film scores lies in the fact that the accompaniment for *Ben Hur* takes a number of cues from the same operas and repeats them numerous times. Instead of composing new themes, Axt and Mendoza used their operatic cues as themes for the Romans, for Ben Hur, for love relationships, for entrances, for actions, and for the presence and influence of Jesus. The effect of a familiar underlying religious theme is thereby maintained. By comparison, Zamecnik composed his own themes and used a wide variety of other works to anchor the film in America, in France, on the battlefield, in the air, or at the Folies Bergère.

Themes

In *Ben Hur*, the Roman theme,[25] for example, is a static brass fanfare from Massenet's *Herodiade*. It automatically appears every time Romans are on screen, sometimes transposed, longer or shorter, always a little unwelcome (especially after the twelfth time). It is always pompous and formal and static, helping, in spite of Arrius, to communicate that Messala and the Romans are the bad guys. The theme for the improbably blonde-wigged seductress Iras, Messala's girlfriend, is the appropriately chosen 'Qui te fait si sévère' from Act I, 2nd Tableau of Massenet's *Thais*.[26] To this tune, Iras slithers and works against Ben Hur like (genders reversed) the snake with Eve in the Garden of Eden. You can see her magic working, until Ben Hur summons his resistance, gets up, and exits. Ben Hur's entrance into the stadium for the chariot race is conveyed as the entrance of a holy figure by using the music for the saint's entrance from Liszt's *Die Legende von der Heiligen Elisabeth #1*, Part 1 (Rehearsal #117). It is not likely that many people at the time were familiar enough with most of this pre-existing repertory to understand the associations,[27] but the music carried musical codes that were (and still are) perfectly clear. It is entrance music for a revered figure. Moreover, every theme, every repeat, functioned as a musically unifying thread, through memory and recall, attaching all former, past instances to the present one, pulling the score and with it the film together.

Zamecnik, on the other hand, creates for *Wings* a languorous love theme that comes back as needed at different speeds;[28] a theme for Jack that expresses his upbeat, energetic, quick-thinking, and car-/plane-crazy personality,[29] and the (if possible) even more energetic tomboy theme for Mary, who likes cars (and Jack) too.[30] We first see Sylvia, the young woman both Jack and David love, on a swing with her preferred boyfriend, David. Her theme catches both the movement of the swing and the slow, tranquil, mature nature of her personality with a bit of nostalgia or foreboding.[31]

Similarly, David's theme is slow, reinforcing the idea that he is serious and thoughtful. In retrospect, it foretells the unhappy ending.[32] The tune in the bass, slow, percussive, and obvious, makes it clear that Herman's theme is meant to provide comic relief.[33] Unlike the themes in *Ben Hur*, the number of repeats here is modest because a substantial number of scenes centre around battle action rather than individual characters. Zamecnik's pre-existing *Knights and Ladies March*[34] and *Crusaders*[35] serve often for the military scenes; repeats of the themes of the main characters provide the necessary unifying threads.

Expressivity

The most frequent emotion caused by the music of *Ben Hur* is excitement, a response to the numerous action scenes, the capture of Ben Hur after the brick falls from his roof (Rehearsal #30), the battle with the pirates (Rehearsal

#45–46), and the chariot race (Rehearsal #118), but there are also softer more self-reflective moments. The love theme in *Ben Hur* emphasises the shy interactions between Ben Hur and Esther, communicated through facial expression and body language, synchronised implicitly through the music from Act I of Jean Nouguès' *Quo Vadis?*[36] Ben Hur's first encounter with Christ[37] is another example. It is accompanied by the Canticle of the Martyrs from Nouguès' *Quo Vadis?* Act IV, Scene I. There is also a scene (Rehearsal #134–135) in which Ben Hur's mother, having been let out of prison, sees Ben Hur asleep in front of his old house, and creeps close to him but can't let him know how happy she is to see him, that she is there, or let him know that she has leprosy. It is expressive of her deep but necessarily restrained love. The music is 'Charme des jours passes où j'entendais sa voix' from Massenet's *Herodiade* Act III Scene IX. In marked contrast, the weird, dissonant music for the torture of Esther's father (Rehearsal #40) or for the scenes in the women's prison[38] or the leper colony (Rehearsal #141) convey sentiments – fear and disturbance – that are not strongly represented in the images.

In *Wings*, there are three scenes where especially the music intensifies the expressivity of the acting. Two are mentioned in the reviews without reference to the role the music played (but both used the same accompaniment). The first is the scene near the beginning of the film where only child David takes leave of his elderly parents and his dog. The accompaniment is Tchaikovsky's *Ye Who Have Yearned Alone* (Rehearsal #22). The second is the scene (Rehearsal #170–172) where David dies in Jack's arms to Donaldson's *My Buddy*. Both of these musical numbers are sad by themselves but make the images unbearably sad. The third scene (Rehearsal #176–179) is when Jack returns home, passing Sylvia in the homecoming parade to a repeat of Tchaikovsky's *Ye Who Have Yearned Alone*, and then has to return David's effects to his parents and ask them for their forgiveness. The musical accompaniment is clearly used in these instances to increase the expressivity of the film. The review in *Variety* said that 90 per cent of the women in the audience cried.[39]

These scenes with their moving music need to be added to other expressive examples, such as the homecoming in Act I of *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915) to 'Home Sweet Home' and 'Old Folks at Home', and to the death of Anna's baby in *Way Down East* (D.W. Griffith, 1920). They demonstrate musical accompaniments increasing the cinema's expressivity, which in turn was being used to make its audience ever-more involved with and dependent on moviegoing.

Constancy of Orchestral Texture a Unifying Feature

The constant presence of an orchestra provided a unifying, stabilising acoustic texture. In both *Ben Hur* and *Wings*, the harmonies passing from one cue or scene to another created harmonic connections that do not jar, unifying into

one long body the many diverse elements in the accompaniment. Particularly in *Ben Hur*, the pre-existing numbers were edited, measures removed, and transition measures added at the end to make them fit one with the other and fit with their scenes (not unlike what Breil did to some of the pre-existent material he used). The resultant musical unity reinforced the connection of the picture to the music.

So, the means that began to be designed in the teens to make an audience dependent on moviegoing included the increased use of orchestral music to submerge the audience in the drama. The variety show format actually was subsumed within the film accompaniments themselves. Music could make a story more expressive, and as such affected the development of the picture itself. It performed a unifying role, helped to establish narrative clarity and mood, clarified scenic structure, could add to the defining of character, glued music to image by creating implicit and explicit synchronisations, could carry an audience's attention over weak spots in a motion picture, and provided a sort of backbone and constant 'screen' upon which to project the pantomimed images.

Comparison of Scores for *Ben Hur*, *Wings*, and *The Birth of a Nation*

As one would expect for different stories, the type of pre-existent music used for *Ben Hur*, *Wings*, and *The Birth of a Nation* differed, not only in the actual repertory used, but in the motivation behind its use. Breil used tunes that had become associated with the north and the south in American Civil War plays. Griffith had hummed or sung a number during the shooting of *The Birth of a Nation*, so he clearly had specific ones in mind for certain scenes. Breil was merely following the director's preordained lead. Otherwise, he used instrumental music from overtures and the symphonic repertory and some instrumental music from opera.[40] By comparison, Axt and Mendoza relied heavily on Christian-themed operas and oratorio with some incidental music sprinkled in. The decision of what opera excerpts to use seems to have been dictated by the function the excerpt had in the opera or the dramatic codes they already had within them. Zamecnik used pop songs associated with the various sides in the First World War, incidental and photoplay music, and some symphonic repertory – no opera. Both Breil and Zamecnik used the pre-existing songs to help locate the film in specific places and certain eras.

While Breil repeated a lot of his own music, he repeated very little of the pre-existing material. Axt and Mendoza repeated the operatic repertory frequently. Zamecnik used repeats in moderation, most often for his own compositions and for battle music, for example Becce's *Battle's Tumult-Blaze*[41] and the fairy music from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*[42] for the aerial battle sequences.

Breil and Zamecnik composed their own themes. Axt and Mendoza did not. Breil was an exceptional arranger but not as good a composer, so his original music is not up to the quality of Axt's or Zamecnik's. All three scores were capable of transforming their pictures, the overuse of minor operatic repertory in *Ben Hur* making it a tad formulaic. Still, the differences between these three scores does not suggest the differences that might have developed over a decade, but maybe that is because Griffith's work, and thus Breil's, was so ahead of its time. If we had been comparing *Ben Hur* and *Wings* to the Cecil B. DeMille *Carmen* from the same year as *The Birth of a Nation*, 1915, the differences would have been much more obvious. *Carmen*'s orchestration (it relied largely on an arranged version of the Bizet opera) and synchronisation were more primitive than those in *Ben Hur* and *Wings*.

But did the *Wings* and *Ben Hur* scores provide a transforming 'finish'? At this point, I must have recourse to my own experiences to answer this question. In my performances, particularly if I was deep in an orchestra pit, audience members would come up to me afterwards and ashamedly admit that after a very little while, they had forgotten that the music was being performed live. The sound had become one with the picture. Dave Kehr of MoMA, who had seen *Rosita* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1923) silent numerous times, said that the music created from a cue sheet had completely transformed the picture. Certainly for me, Breil's orchestral score transformed *The Birth of a Nation* (into a malicious but grand epic). For Italian Catholic audiences, the reconstructed score for *Ben Hur* transformed the film into a moving dramatic religious experience. The *Wings* score with the picture caused one of the members of the Wellman family to cry so violently that she had to leave the box they were in. They had all seen the film either silent or with an improvised piano accompaniment before, and until then had never found it particularly moving. Perhaps these reactions are specific to our times, but I suspect even in the 1920s the orchestral scores to *Ben Hur* and *Wings* provided a transforming 'finish' to these two feature-length films.

To make a 'mute' film seem like a completely different moving picture, music has to bring a particular kind of energy and colour and texture that the moving picture does not have. It has to loan this energy and texture through three-dimensional space by attaching itself through implicit and explicit synchronisation points and mimetic gestures. It has to begin and end with each scene. It has to be appropriate in tempo and mood, in colour and rhythm. The composition has to allow the performance to capitalise on all the expressive techniques available, rubato, dynamics, phrasing. It has to utilise the musico-dramatic codes that it and all the other dramatic musical arts have developed. Then the joining of the audio and visual energies causes a kind of metaphorical chemical reaction and a new element results, a transformed moving picture.

If one reads the reviews from the teens and the 1920s, the excitement expressed multiple times is a response to this transformation, but rarely is music

or sound's role in this process ever recognised or acknowledged. The sound had so perfectly joined the image that it had disappeared, having created something new in the process.[43]

By marginalising the role that music played in the development of the feature film, cinema studies has not only diminished the power of the works under its aegis, but has lost sight of part of the foundation for the recorded sound cinema. It has lost sight of the fact that today, when the talking stops and music and sound continue with the image, one still has a form of accompanied pantomime, and many of the techniques developed during the teens and the 1920s to accompany moving pictures went right on being used in the scores for the talkies. Thus, as I hope to have demonstrated, the world of the 'mute' film is not as distant or as strange as it still has been taken to be.

Notes

1 I worked from an original copy of the piano conductor score that I was given by Northeast Historic Film. The violin part is at the New York Public Library. William Axt had an operatic background. He served as an assistant conductor at the Hammerstein Grand Opera Company, maybe even at the same time the operas of Massenet, Charpentier, and Nouguès were being introduced to New York audiences. Afterwards, Axt was the conductor for opera singer Emma Trentini before becoming a music director at the Capitol Theater in 1919. 'Axt, William', in *The ASCAP Biographical Dictionary of Composers, Authors, and Publishers*, ed. Daniel I. McNamara (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1948), 12. Mendoza was mainly an orchestral conductor for the Victor Talking Machine, Russian Symphony, and New York Symphony orchestras before serving as music director and principal conductor at the Capitol Theater under S.L. Rothapfel. 'Mendoza, David', in *The ASCAP Biographical Dictionary of Composers, Authors, and Publishers*, ed. Daniel I. McNamara (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1948), 255.

2 My source for this score is a copyright deposit at the Library of Congress Music Division. John Stepan Zamecnik (1872–1953) was an American composer and conductor. He worked as a violinist and composer and played in the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under Victor Herbert. In 1907, he became music director of the Hippodrome Theater in Cleveland, Ohio, where he started to compose scores for mute films that were published by Sam Fox.

3 Breil's music in Act II of *The Birth of a Nation* does not function as well because of his own limitations as a composer. Some of the characteristics described below could also be obtained by an all pre-existent musical score or by a score realised from a cue sheet. The result depended very much on the dramatic sense and knowledge of the repertory on the part of the compiler and the way it was realised.

4 In 1933, Alfred Hitchcock even saw the connection. Stephen Watts, 'Alfred Hitchcock on Music in Films', *Cinema Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1933–1934): 80–3, quoted in Julie Hubbert, ed., *Celluloid Symphonies: Texts and Contexts in Film Music History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 164–7.

5 Synchronised sound did not arrive only with the talking picture.

6 The piano conductor and first violin parts are all that remain of the original orchestration for *Ben Hur*. The small orchestra arrangements of the opera excerpts used were identified and located. I used these instead of the full scores because I thought they were what would have been available to Axt and Mendoza. I was able to identify and locate many but not all of the pre-existing stock arrangements

as well. I re-orchestrated Axt and Mendoza's original music. On the other hand, all that remains of the score for *Wings* is a copyright deposit of the piano conductor in which all the pre-existent music is identified, and this was located in numerous collections throughout the world. Stephen Bulla and I re-orchestrated the original music by Zamecnik. I performed the reconstructed orchestrations for *Ben Hur* and *Wings* at the Michigan Theatre in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Paramount Theater in Austin, Texas, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (*Wings*), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (*Ben Hur*), Cinememoire in Paris, France (*Wings)*, and with orchestras in Holland, Italy, and Sweden (*Ben Hur)*.

7 George W. Beynon, *The Musical Presentation of Motion Pictures* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1921), 89. *Ben Hur* is currently available with a new score by Carl Davis (discussed in Chapter 8 in this volume), and *Wings* has been newly issued by Paramount with sound effects but with the original score refurbished with new arrangements so that the original orchestrations have been obliterated. It no longer sounds as though it was made in 1927.

8 Richard Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture 1915–1928* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 33. Both *Ben Hur* and *Wings* were at the top of the lists of the most popular films.

9 Gillian B. Anderson, 'Synchronized Music: The Influence of Pantomime on Moving Pictures', *Music and the Moving Image* 8, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 3–39; Gillian B. Anderson, 'The Shock of the Old: The Restoration, Reconstruction, or Creation of "Mute" Film Accompaniments', in *The Routledge Companion to Screen Music and Sound*, ed. Miguel Mera, Ron Sadoff, and Ben Winters (London: Routledge, 2017), 201–12.

10 See, for instance, Gillian B. Anderson, *Music for Silent Film, 1892–1929: A Guide* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2018); Koszarski, *An Evening's Entertainment*, 41–55.

11 If the film is run at 24 fps, the race lasts almost 6.5 minutes, and at 22 fps over a minute longer. There are those who think the speed was changed for the race. I've done it both ways, and think at the faster speed the race has more of the character of a mad dash.

12 As did the 'philologically correct' original score, created 25 years earlier by American composer Edgar Stillman Kelley for *Ben Hur* the stage play. Kelley's score, although very successful, had been criticised for being musically 'tame and tuneless': 'Mr. Kelley's intent to have the music carry one logically along with the play shows high ideals and the result on the whole is impressive. Wherein Mr. Kelley's music fails is in the monotonous effect which results from too great an effort to give archaic Oriental effects. This may represent much research and skill, but it is carried too far and to modern ears is tame and tuneless.' 'In the Domain of Music', *The Saint Paul Globe*, 2 December 1900, 16.

13 These results contradict Roger Hickman's contention that opera was not used as a model in *Ben Hur*, or that the chariot race was devoid of music. Roger Hickman, 'The *Ben Hur* Legacy', *Journal of Film Music* 5, nos. 1–2 (2012): 41–8.

14 Which relies heavily on operas introduced to an American audience by the Chicago-Philadelphia Opera Company, the Hammerstein Manhattan Opera House, and singer Mary Garden.

15 We cannot rule out the possibility that Axt and Mendoza simply put together all the Christian-themed operatic fantasies and selections for small orchestra in the Capitol Theatre Library, played through the selections with the picture running, and made their choices.

16 Today, we would not associate little magical beings with aeroplanes, but the Mendelssohn was also recommended by Rapee as the appropriate music for their accompaniment.

17 Many of the scores, and certainly the cue sheets, are examples of this concept, the transfer of what had been external in the presentation to the inside of the accompaniment itself.
18 'The tremendous advantage of a film being musically accompanied had been demonstrated by "silents" like *Ben Hur* and *Way Down East*.' Stephen Watts, 'Alfred Hitchcock on Music in Films'. The review of *Wings* in *Variety* thought other battle films had had better music, but two of the scenes that it singled out as the most touching had to have had their effect because of the music: 'Musically the score is not as stirring as that for some of the other war supers.' '*Wings*', *Variety*, 17 August 1927, 21. However, in Boston, 'An excellent musical setting adds to the effectiveness of the picture. The great planes, winging over the enlarged screen, is a sight that one cannot forget. The crash as the opposing planes come together, the flame and smoke as they fall to earth and the wreckage as they land are all realistically portrayed. No one who sees *Wings* will fail to be impressed by the awful majesty of the war in the air and the bravery of the young fighters. There are some very good scenes showing warfare on the ground and the value of the tanks and the aeroplanes. One of the best scenes shows the hero in his "Shooting Star" dashing down on a whole regiment of Germans on its way to the front and the resulting havoc.' '*Wings* Film of Vivid Realism: Thrilling Pictures of Epic Battles in Air Shown in Romance of the World War', *The Boston Globe*, 20 December 1927, 10.
19 Unlike the scores for D.W. Griffith films, there are only brief dramatic silences.
20 Beynon, *Musical Presentation of Motion Pictures*, 92; Anderson, 'Synchronized Music', 19–21, 34–36, footnotes 122–127 documents the use of stopwatches. I too begin the reconstruction process by timing each scene as defined by the cues in the piano conductor score. I count the number of beats in the music for each scene and, using an algebraic equation, I calculate the metronome marking. I run the film over and over again with the metronome clicking and write additional cues to the picture over the music. In this way, I have observed the fact that the tempos of the music catch the motions and actions on screen, making many implicit synchronisations, not just with *Ben Hur* and *Wings*, but with many of the over 50 films whose scores I have restored or reconstructed. Undeniably, at least at the composer/compiler level, the observed implicit synchronisation was intended.
21 Rehearsal #43, 48.
22 The duration of the scene, six or seven minutes, could have allowed Axt to develop a reasonable piece. Instead, he just had the music repeat four times. This might have been because he knew the scene would be accompanied by sound effects. A set of boring repeats in the Babylonian sequence in *Intolerance* (D.W. Griffith, 1916) might have been similarly justified, but as it is the music for the chariot race is – well – boring. It does not adversely affect the scene, but other than the incessant rhythm it does not add a whole lot either.
23 See the discussion of implicit and explicit synchronisations in Ennio Morricone and Sergio Miceli, *Composing for the Cinema: The Theory and Praxis of Music in Film*, trans. Gillian B. Anderson (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2013), 76–7, 179–82, 218–19. I believe this kind of synchronisation is part of the moving picture's inheritance from pantomime and pantomime ballet.
24 By comparison *The Birth of a Nation* has 38 compositions by 34 composers. Martin Miller Marks, *Music and the Silent Film: Contexts and Case Studies, 1895–1924* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
25 Rehearsal #Overture m. 1–8, #5, 25, 31, 41, 55, 57, 61, 80, 85, 104, 108.
26 Rehearsal #86, 89, 92, 94.
27 Except for *Thais*, there were very few performances of them.
28 Rehearsal #2, 8, 12, 19, 21, 87, 98, 100, 113, 116, 180, Exit.
29 Rehearsal #4, 5, 21, 92, 94, 120, Exit.

30 Rehearsal #5, 20, 35, 77, 102, 104.
31 Rehearsal #10, 17, 19, 120, 122, 174, 176.
32 Rehearsal #18, 42, 118, 120.
33 Rehearsal #15, 24, 28, 38, 51, 53.
34 Rehearsal #37, 39, 46, 47, 56, 66, 117, 127.
35 Rehearsal #54, 90, 93, 134, 144.
36 Rehearsal #19, 20, 21, 71, 71b, 76, 82, 84, 99, 123, 136.
37 Rehearsal #34, 37, 39.
38 Rehearsal #64, 130.
39 Sid., '*Wings*', *Variety*, 17 August 1927, 21.
40 For example, the overture to Bellini's *Norma* for the Ford's Theater scene and Wagner's *Rienzi* Overture, *Ride of Valkyries* and Weber's *Der Freischütz Overture* for the ride of the Ku Klux Klan.
41 Rehearsal #63, 135, 150, 153, 159.
42 Rehearsal #58, 58a, 61, 130, 134, 152, 164.
43 Perhaps it was this type of transformation that later ignorant studio executives and composers attempted to mandate by insisting that the music be kept so low in the mix that it could not be heard.

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Chapter 7

Edmund Meisel's Score to *Der heilige Berg* (1926)

Prefiguring Hollywood's 'Golden Age' Narrative-Scoring Practices in Live Performance

Fiona Ford

Our notion of a quintessential silent film accompaniment in America and Europe from the mid-1920s is a score comprising extracts from the pre-existing classical and popular repertories and performed by an orchestra in a large movie palace. Michael Slowik has suggested that, in American practice, these compiled scores rarely attempted to match small-scale on-screen actions, and that because the music 'emerged from an orchestra that was visible in the theater, diegetic/non-diegetic distinctions would have held little meaning.'[1] Typically, the number of 'sync points' would be minimal and limited to high-level structural spotting for major scene changes. This was due to entirely practical considerations: musical directors had severely limited preparation and rehearsal time for each new feature, and tended to avoid the risks inherent in devising a complex score that required too many sync points to be correctly aligned with the screen action in live performance. Slowik argues that such detailed precision only became practicable in the early sound era after rerecording technology allowed manipulation of the soundtrack in post-production and film-makers moved away from the conventions of silent film music.[2] While this generalisation is largely true, a few intrepid composers and conductors devised special scores and compiled accompaniments for silent films in the late 1920s that did require intricate narrative synchronisation in live performance.

One such pioneer was the Austrian composer Edmund Meisel, who attempted to 'hit' a remarkable number of sync points in significant parts of his score to *Der heilige Berg* (*The Holy Mountain*; dir. Arnold Fanck, Germany, 1926).[3] Meisel's score incorporates many close narrative scoring practices that were later associated with the development of non-diegetic scoring in Hollywood's early sound films and those from the later 'golden age' by, say, Max Steiner and Erich Korngold. These include a web of leitmotifs for character delineation, a rapid exchange of musical ideas to match cross-cutting, reaction shots, visions and flashbacks, Mickey Mousing, and stinger chords to register a character's psychological shock.

Though born in Vienna, Meisel spent most of his life in Berlin and began his composing career in the mid-1920s writing incidental music for

two political revues commissioned by the German Communist Party and designed by the left-wing agitprop theatre director Erwin Piscator.[4] Between 1925 and 1930, he composed incidental music for a further 15 stage and radio productions (by Piscator, Bertolt Brecht, and others), at least six feature-length silent film scores, two sound shorts, and a post-synchronised score for an early British sound feature. (Two of his silent film scores were also recorded as post-synchronisations.) Meisel is best known for his scores for the Berlin premieres of Sergei Eisenstein's revolutionary experiments in montage technique – *Battleship Potemkin* (1926) and *October* (1928) – and for Walter Ruttmann's abstract film symphony *Berlin. Die Sinfonie der Großstadt* (1927). Tragically, Meisel died in 1930 at the age of 36 due to complications following acute appendicitis.

Der heilige Berg is a key text in the 'mountain film' genre, a series of German films from the 1920s and early 1930s (made chiefly by Fanck) that depicted individuals in extreme alpine settings who were able to prevail against the forces of nature because of their athletic bodies and incorruptible morals. The plot concerns a love triangle between the dancer Diotima (Leni Riefenstahl, in her first major acting role) and two mountain climbers: 'The Friend' (played by Luis Trenker) and his younger companion, Vigo (Ernst Petersen).[5] Diotima and 'The Friend' fall in love, but Vigo is also besotted with her. After having seen Diotima with another man, the older climber sets out on a dangerous mountain climb to get away from her, taking Vigo with him. Beset by avalanches and stormy conditions, they shelter on an icy precipice, where he discovers that it was Vigo he had seen with Diotima. His menacing reaction causes Vigo to fall over the edge; the young man is left dangling beneath an overhang, bound to the other man by a rope. Unable to pull Vigo to safety, the older climber refuses to cut the rope and save himself. Instead, he stoically remains standing all night, holding on to Vigo. At sunrise, he hallucinates that he and Diotima are entering an ice palace. His vision is shattered and he walks over the edge to his death. A rescue party summoned by Diotima arrives too late to save him.

Fanck's plots were largely incidental to the stunning alpine scenery, dangerous mountain climbing and athletic ski sports (much of *Der heilige Berg*, for example, consists of a ski-jumping event and a long-distance ski race). While the bourgeois and conservative camps of contemporaneous German audiences were attracted by the beautiful, dangerous, and seemingly inaccessible outdoor location shooting in Fanck's films, because they were so different from the typical studio-bound films for which Weimar cinema was famous, left-wing critics protested against the films' underlying Darwinist ideology, which 'placed them in dangerous proximity to National Socialist propaganda, with its "selective breeding," "national hygiene," and "racial considerations"'.[6]

Meisel's score to *Der heilige Berg* has remained largely neglected because of this association with Nazi ideology. The German film historian Werner Sudendorf has described *Der heilige Berg* as an anomaly within Meisel's (mostly left-wing) oeuvre, a score written purely for financial reasons and

prestige.[7] (The commission came from UFA, Germany's largest film producer and conglomerate, in the wake of the popular success of *Potemkin* – due in no small part to the notoriety of Meisel's accompaniment.) I would suggest an alternative explanation. Prior to *Potemkin*, Meisel had written some newspaper articles in which he declared his desire to write film accompaniments. He also described his ideal score: one constructed from a combination of original composition and apposite borrowings closely tailored to the dramatic action, using a simple leitmotif technique to explicate the drama and musical representations of sound effects and motion (prefiguring what is now termed 'Mickey Mousing') to create a heightened realism.[8] *Der heilige Berg* – a more traditional narrative than *Potemkin* – was therefore the ideal opportunity for Meisel to try out his ideal scoring practices.[9] His enthusiasm for his mountain film score is apparent in his article 'Wie schreibt man Filmmusik?' ('How do you write film music?'), which was published in the April 1927 issue of UFA's in-house publication to tie in with the film's general release.[10] With the aid of some brief music examples, he explained how he had composed his score in exact concordance with the action, drawing instant inspiration from the images to create a web of leitmotifs based on the characteristics of the protagonists, and had used 'operatic underscoring' to intensify the effect of the most important dialogue rendered in the intertitles. Far from being an anomaly within his oeuvre, *Der heilige Berg* is the blueprint for his post-Ruttmann feature-length scores, its style a portent of what might have been had Meisel lived long enough to have scored more sound films. Where possible, his preferred method of working was – like Korngold – to improvise ideas at the piano while watching a film. From his own description of how he composed his score to *Der heilige Berg*, it is evident that Meisel had an acute visual-dramatic instinct: 'A filmic image stimulates me in such a way that the moment I see it I experience a distinctive accompanying sound shape for the relevant scene'.[11] Crucially (and often detrimentally to his reputation as a composer), he was prepared to subjugate musical form to the dictates of the drama.

Film and Extant Score Resources

Fanck's *Der heilige Berg* was initially released in Austria in the autumn of 1926 with a runtime exceeding two hours (length 3,100 metres). The director slightly reduced the film's length (to 3,024 metres) for the Berlin premiere on 17 December that year and made more drastic cuts for the general release in Germany the following April (reducing it to 2,668 metres).[12] A restoration of the film print made in 2001 was subsequently released on DVD with a new original score by Aljoscha Zimmermann.[13] Given the restoration's runtime (106 minutes), the content is nearer to that in the shorter version released in Germany in April 1927 than the longer Berlin premiere version for which Meisel's score was composed. The score analysis

in this chapter is based on the latter, and some of it does not match the content in the restored print.

The Berlin premiere took place on 17 December 1926 at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo with Meisel's score conducted by the resident music director Artur Guttmann. Since the Ufa-Palast maintained one of the largest cinema orchestras anywhere in Germany, Meisel probably had a full symphonic orchestra of at least 70 players at his disposal.[14] The occasional orchestration annotations in his surviving printed piano score (the only extant source) indicate a standard late romantic orchestra, including trombones, tuba, and harp, supplemented by solo piano and organ.[15] There is also a prefatory list of 'required percussion instruments', which, in addition to typical orchestral percussion, includes a concertina and various implements for specific sound effects (siren, large rattle, birch rod, broken crockery, wind machine, thunder machine, and water machine), similar to the traps built into the largest contemporaneous cinema organs.[16]

Meisel's score, like the film, is divided into nine sections (a prelude and eight acts). It contains tantalising glimpses of Fanck's various revisions through the presence of both printed and handwritten excisions. More importantly, there are almost 400 printed synchronisation markings which comprise the beginnings of most intertitles and regular descriptions concerning the action. From these, it is possible to assess the extent to which Meisel matched Fanck's editing with close narrative scoring. The number of printed markings varies between acts/reels (as does the size of the acts), but the majority – almost half – are concentrated during Acts V–VII. These acts chart the events of the ill-fated mountain climb that leads to Vigo dangling precariously over a precipice, while the older climber clings on to him by rope and a party of skiers races through the night in a futile rescue attempt.

Foreground Scoring

The first remarkable aspect of Meisel's score is his sophisticated delineation of diegetic space, which shows that he was consciously differentiating between the foreground (diegetic) and background (non-diegetic) registers. This is significant since the advent of truly non-diegetic underscoring only begins once the diegetic moments have been formally identified and separated. There are three main kinds of diegetic moments in his score: on-screen music-making and dancing, the operatic underscoring of dialogue in intertitles, and sound effects.

Meisel seized every possible opportunity to represent the diegetic music-making in Fanck's film, both the frequent playing of authentic-sounding *Ländler* on concertinas by various characters in alpine settings and Diotima's dance performances in a resort hotel. These diegetic sections are made distinct from the surrounding score stylistically through the use of source music or pastiche composition with predictable harmonic and melodic phrasing,

and through changes in instrumentation to suggest a change in aural perspective. Just as in many early sound films, the legitimacy of the diegetic music-making is always primed by at least one brief shot of the performers involved. Admittedly, most of the sections involving concertina playing only portray a general delineation of diegetic space. In Act II, for example, there is extended footage of Diotima wandering through the daisy-strewn alpine meadows. On her travels, she encounters a shepherd playing his concertina and begins to dance to his music. In Meisel's score, there is a 16-bar waltz for this footage, ending with the instruction to repeat '*D.S. ad lib.*'[17] This material is repeated multiple times while Diotima continues on her journey, greeting a young boy, and cuddling a lamb. Such an example should more accurately be described as being quasi-diegetic, since the concertina music continues without any change in aural perspective even though Diotima quickly moves some distance away from the source of the music-making. The more convincing diegetic sections are those for Diotima's two dance recitals in the Grand Hotel (Acts I and VI).

In her late teens, Riefenstahl developed a deep passion for interpretive dance and went on to have a successful, but brief, career as a solo artiste in the early 1920s. Although she studied for a few months with Mary Wigman in Dresden, Riefenstahl received most of her training from Jutta Klamt in Berlin. Ultimately, Riefenstahl developed her own kinaesthetic style and choreography, generally performing barefoot in costumes she designed herself against a black backdrop illuminated by coloured spotlights.[18] She danced to a selection of popular late nineteenth-century piano pieces and arrangements, the titles either based on the music's form or given fancier descriptions. For example, 'Mazurka' (Godard), *Three Dances of Eros* – 'Fire', 'Devotion', and 'Separation' – to music by Tchaikovsky, Chopin, and Grieg – and 'Dream Blossom' to music by Chopin.[19] Most of Diotima's dances in Act I of *Der heilige Berg* were taken directly from Riefenstahl's repertoire. It is highly likely that her performances were filmed whilst a piano accompaniment was played off set and Meisel matched some of these scenes with the same music from her repertoire.[20] As a result of these authentic diegetic inserts, the film bears similarities with the backstage musicals made popular in the early years of Hollywood sound film, where a protagonist's everyday life as a performer would be set against the tribulations of their private life.

Diotima's first dance recital at the hotel in Act I, attended by the two climbers, is crucial to the plot, as it instigates the romantic infatuations that lead to the tragic deaths of both men. She performs three dances, 'Dance to the Sea', 'Dream Blossom', and 'Devotion'. For the first dance, Meisel orchestrated an abridgement of Godard's Mazurka for piano, Op. 54 No. 2 (there are two major excisions). Riefenstahl's movements and gestures more clearly match the melodic contours of the music for the second dance, 'Dream Blossom', which is accompanied by the entirety of Chopin's Nocturne in F sharp major, Op. 15 No. 2 – marked in Meisel's score for piano solo.[21] Meisel's close narrative scoring

is apparent in the brief gaps between the dances. For example, within the 10 bars of score that separate the second and third dances (see Figure 7.1, up until rehearsal mark 19), Meisel matches six separate sync points.[22] These comprise Vigo's applause (the simple D major triadic fanfare at rehearsal mark 18), 'The Friend' leaving the auditorium (accompanied by his leitmotif), Diotima rising to her feet (part of her leitmotif), Diotima taking a bow (more applause), 'The Friend' in the hotel foyer (his leitmotif again), and a conversation between 'The Friend' and his mother about Diotima (part of her leitmotif).[23] The action then cuts back to the auditorium, where Vigo is watching Diotima conclude her third dance, 'Devotion'. The presentation of this dance is more subtle and is shown via two brief shots, accompanied by orchestrated extracts from the end of Chopin's 'Raindrop' Prelude in D flat major, Op. 28 No. 15 (see Figure 7.1, starting at rehearsal marks 19, first five bars, and 20, first six bars). In between, Meisel's musical material changes in line with Fanck's shots of 'The Friend' en route to go climbing, his mother, and one of the majestic mountain. These intervening eight bars (containing a four-bar variation of his heroic theme, the mother's theme, and the 'Mountain' theme; see Figure 7.1, starting six bars after rehearsal mark 19) are among the printed excisions in the score, removing the sense of lapsed time between the two 'Devotion' shots.

There are two further uses of the Chopin pieces. Later outside the hotel, Diotima – to motifs from her own theme – asks the love-struck Vigo which of her dances he liked best (see Figure 7.2, four bars after rehearsal mark 24). He demonstrates by taking her headscarf and putting it over his own head in imitation of the veil she had worn in her 'Devotion' dance. Here, Meisel reprises Chopin's prelude, starting three bars before the second extract, that is, from a point that had not been heard in the score (compare Figure 7.2, six bars after rehearsal mark 24 until rehearsal mark 25, with rehearsal mark 20 in Figure 7.1). Such a use could be described as source or even internal diegetic scoring. Many in the audiences would have recognised these extracts, even though the 'Raindrop' prelude had not been played in its entirety (nor had its main theme been heard). The piece was a popular staple of silent film illustrations, as shown by its inclusion in Giuseppe Becce's 12-volume *Kinothek* series.[24]

The second nuanced use of a Chopin extract occurs in Act VI when 'The Friend' and Vigo shelter from the storm on an icy precipice. 'The Friend' is delirious with jealousy and raging over Diotima's supposed betrayal. (He had seen her with another man, but did not know that it was Vigo.) He has a vision of Diotima, first static on stage and then frenetically dancing (see Figure 7.3, rehearsal mark 1, first three bars). Shortly after, he picks up the concertina and begins singing and playing in a deranged fashion. Meisel reprises the Nocturne theme for his manic music-making, marking it as 'distorted (with a grim sense of humour)'. This can be seen in the 10-bar section in Figure 7.3, beginning at rehearsal mark 2.[25]

Meisel used certain intertitles as a resource from which to create surrogate 'vocal' lines in his score, suggesting gender through register and instrumentation, and using the rhythmic and melodic contours to mirror the intonation

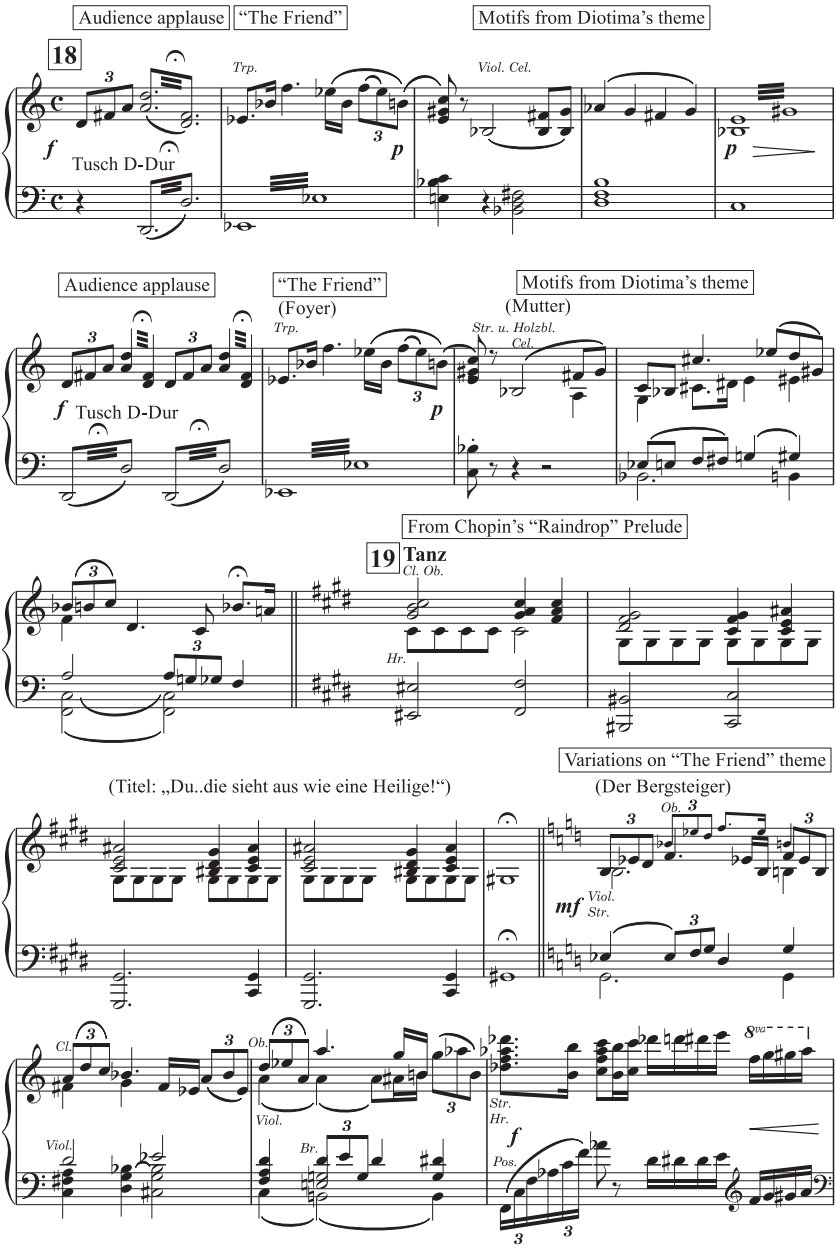


Figure 7.1 (continued)

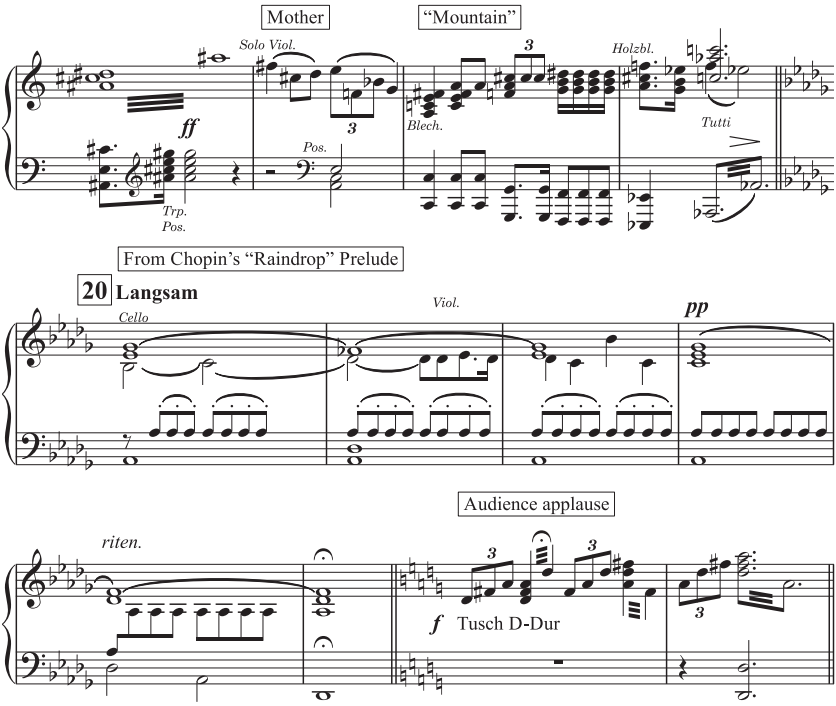


Figure 7.1 From Act I, pages 16–17, of Edmund Meisel's *Der heilige Berg* (piano score)
Source: Reproduced by permission of the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt am Main/Musikarchiv.

and emotions of the speaker.[26] (This quest for human expression has many antecedents, including the vox humana organ stop and the imitation of ordinary speech in orchestral recitatives, as in the opening of the Finale to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.) There are several instances highlighted in grey in Figures 7.2–7.4. These range from short exclamations, such as 'The Friend' crying out, 'It was you!' on realising that it was Vigo he had seen with Diotima, and subsequently calling out his name after the young climber has fallen over the precipice (see Figure 7.3, one bar before rehearsal mark 4 and three bars before rehearsal mark 5), to longer statements, such as Vigo telling his friend, 'Pull yourself together, you are crazy' (see Figure 7.3, five bars before rehearsal mark 2) and the mother asking Diotima, 'Was one man not enough for you?' (see Figure 7.4, seven bars after rehearsal mark 15). There is also some effective use of silence interspersed between Diotima's pleas ('Who will go up? For my sake'), representing the audience's discomfort during the second recital, when they discover that the two climbers are missing and she asks for male volunteers to form a rescue party (see Figure 7.4, from three bars before rehearsal mark 14 until four

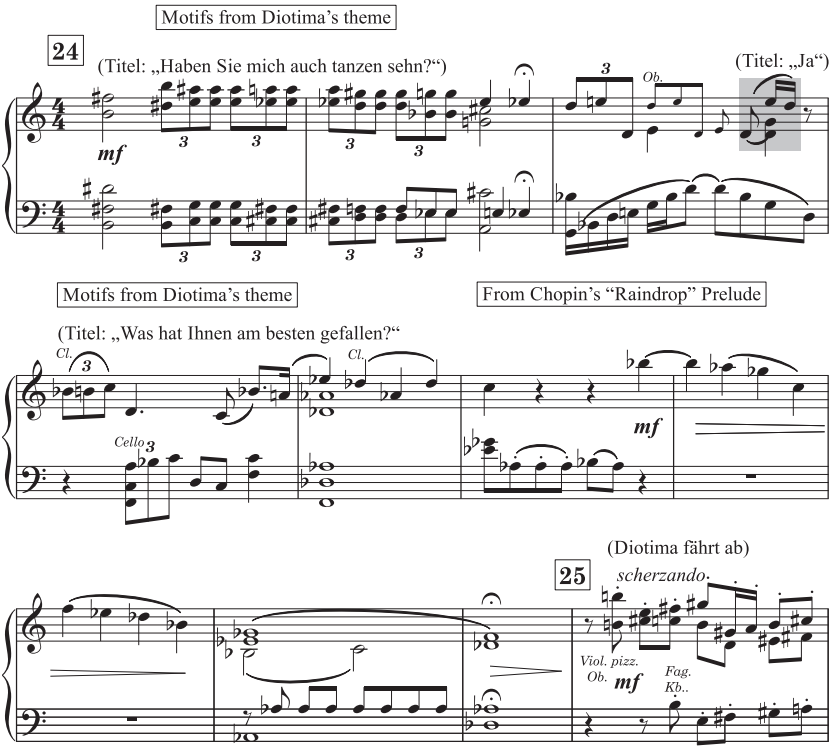


Figure 7.2 From Act I, page 18, of Edmund Meisel's *Der heilige Berg* (piano score)
Source: Reproduced by permission of the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt am Main/Musikarchiv.

bars before rehearsal mark 15). In these operatic exclamations, Meisel typically makes the melodic line prominent by either reducing the bass line to simple tremolos or removing the bass line altogether. These instances also stand out from the rest of the score due to their expressionistic, angular, and more purely atonal (rather than merely dissonant) style. For the most anguished lines of dialogue, as, for example, 'The Friend' calling out in desperation, 'Vigo, I would not do anything to harm you!', he employs the equally simple but effective means of augmented harmonies in unison rhythm (see opening of Figure 7.4).

In addition to these large-scale operatic underscorings, Meisel tackles some smaller-scale moments by embodying a character's horrified reaction through sforzando stinger chords. For example, Diotima fearing for the safety of her beloved 'Friend' who is not in the audience for her second recital as promised (see Figure 7.3, bar 6), or 'The Friend' realising that the woman with whom Vigo is in love is Diotima (see Figure 7.3, the anacrusis to one bar before rehearsal mark 4).

Titel: „Aufruhr!“

Diotima

Moderato

(Ob. Fl.)

trem.

f

Str.
Holzbl.

Pos.

espress.

(Ruf)

Trp.

Titel: „Aber es muß ihn etwas passiert sein!“

ffz

Er und Vigo am Abgrund

pp

1 Diotima

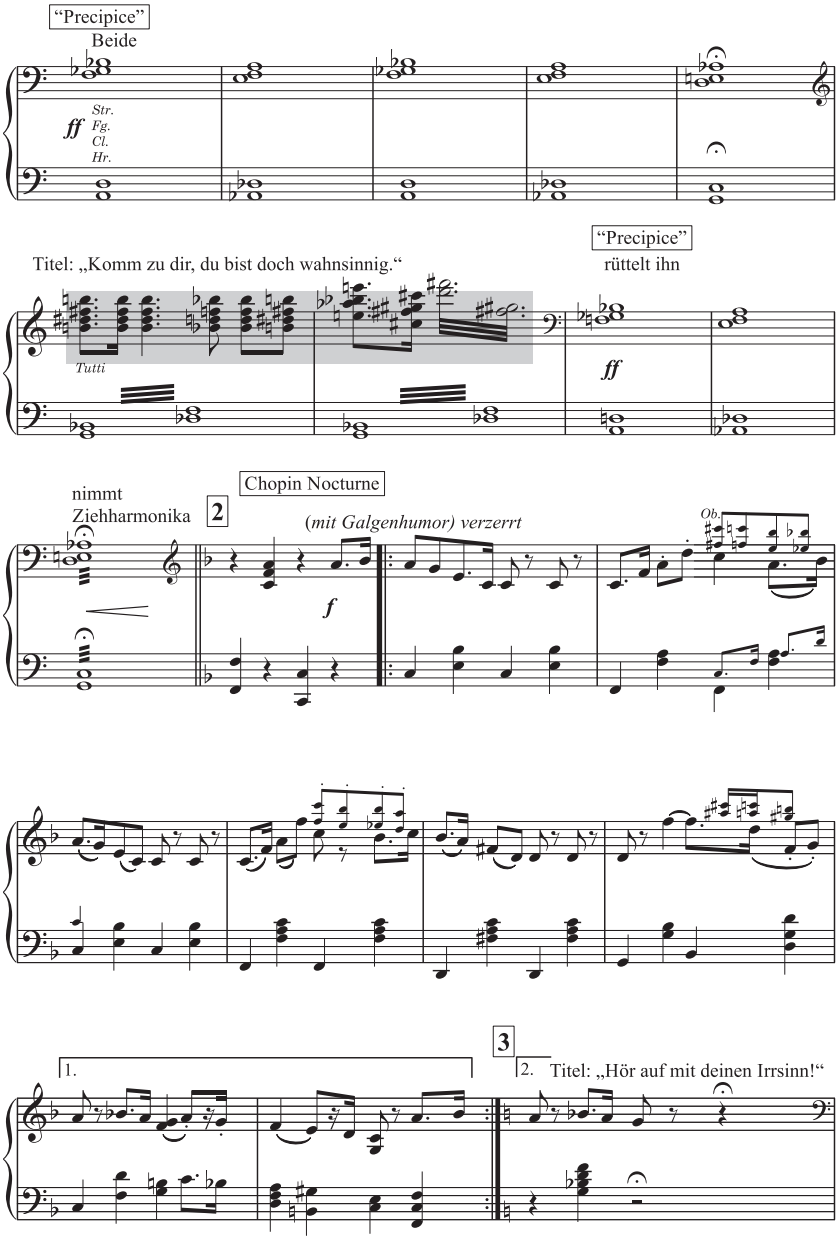
Er sieht im Geist die tanzende Diotima

Ob.

p

Figure 7.3 (continued)

(continued)


"Precipice"
Beide
ff
Str.
Fg.
Cl.
Hr.
Titel: „Komm zu dir, du bist doch wahnsinnig."
Tutti
"Precipice"
rüttelt ihn
ff
nimmt
Ziehharmonika
2
Chopin Nocturne
(mit Galgenhumor) verzerrt
f
Ob.
3
1.
2.
Titel: „Hör auf mit deinen Irrsinn!"

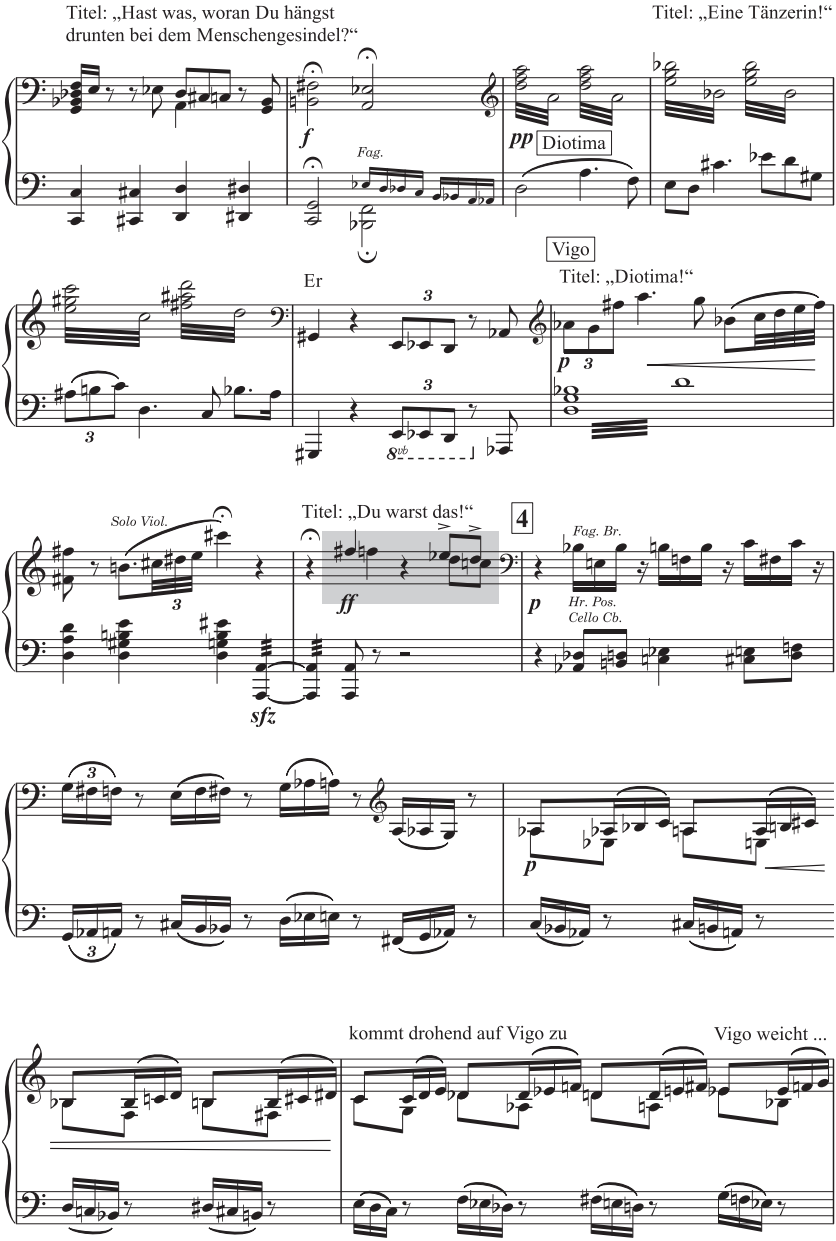


Figure 7.3 (continued)

(continued)

... zurück

immer mehr

stürzt ab

Titel: „Vigo!“

Audience applause

2 Mal Tusch in D

ff

f

Tanzabend

“Dance to Joy” material

Titel: „Und so tanzt sie ihren Tanz an die Freude“

5 Cello

“Precipice”

veloce

Str. Holzbl.

mf

mf

Hrf.

Abgrund

Figure 7.3 From Act VI, pages 72–4, of Edmund Meisel's *Der heilige Berg* (piano score)

Source: Reproduced by permission of the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt am Main/Musikarchiv.

Other smaller-scale events include the many sound effects written directly into the score and made within the orchestra and its extensive percussion section. Most of these are achieved through varying combinations of loud accentuated chords, tremolo chords, and rapid descending or ascending figurations representing the shape and trajectory of the action. For instance, applause for Diotima at her performances (see Figure 7.1, bars 1, 6, and last two bars), Vigo falling over the edge of the precipice (see Figure 7.3, starting three and a half bars before rehearsal mark 5), and the storm blowing the door open in the mother's house (see Figure 7.4, bar 4).[27]

Perhaps the most poignant example is the 'Mickey Mousing' of each step made by 'The Friend' as he staggers over the precipice to join his young friend in death (see the bass line octaves marked with caesuras in bars 3–5 of Figure 7.5).

„Vigo, ich hätte Dir doch nichts getan!“

Mutter

ff

p

Mother

10

“Fate”

„Bin mit Vigo zur Bezwingung der Nordwand“

p

Viol.

Entsetzen

“Mountain”

Bergbild

Pos.

p (Blech.)

Mother

Mutter eilt fort

fz

Diotima

Diotima in der Gärderobe

dolce

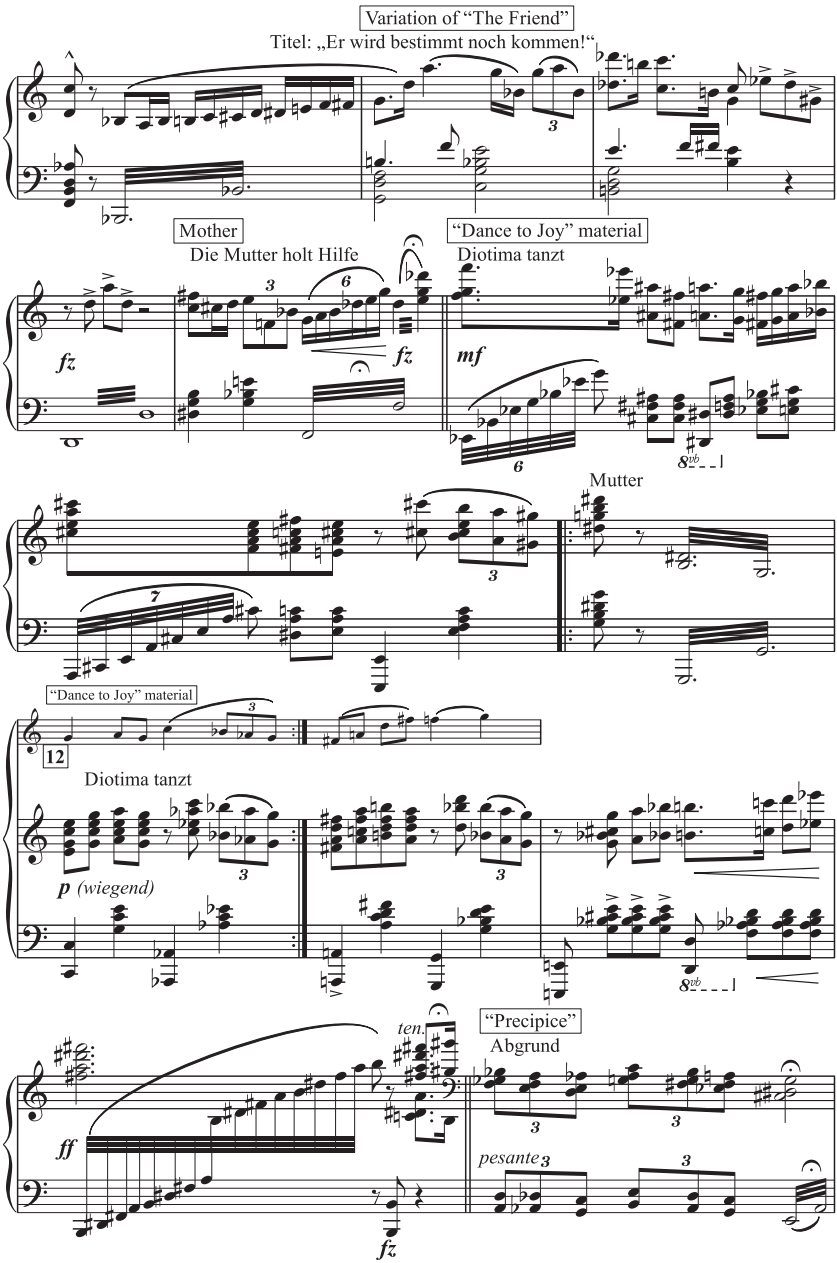
Viol.

Titel: „Ich kann nicht mehr tanzen!“

11

Figure 7.4 (continued)

(continued)


Variation of "The Friend"
Titel: „Er wird bestimmt noch kommen!"
Mother
Die Mutter holt Hilfe
"Dance to Joy" material
Diotima tanzt
fz
fz
mf
Mutter
"Dance to Joy" material
12
Diotima tanzt
p (wiegend)
ten.
"Precipice"
Abgrund
ff
fz
pesante

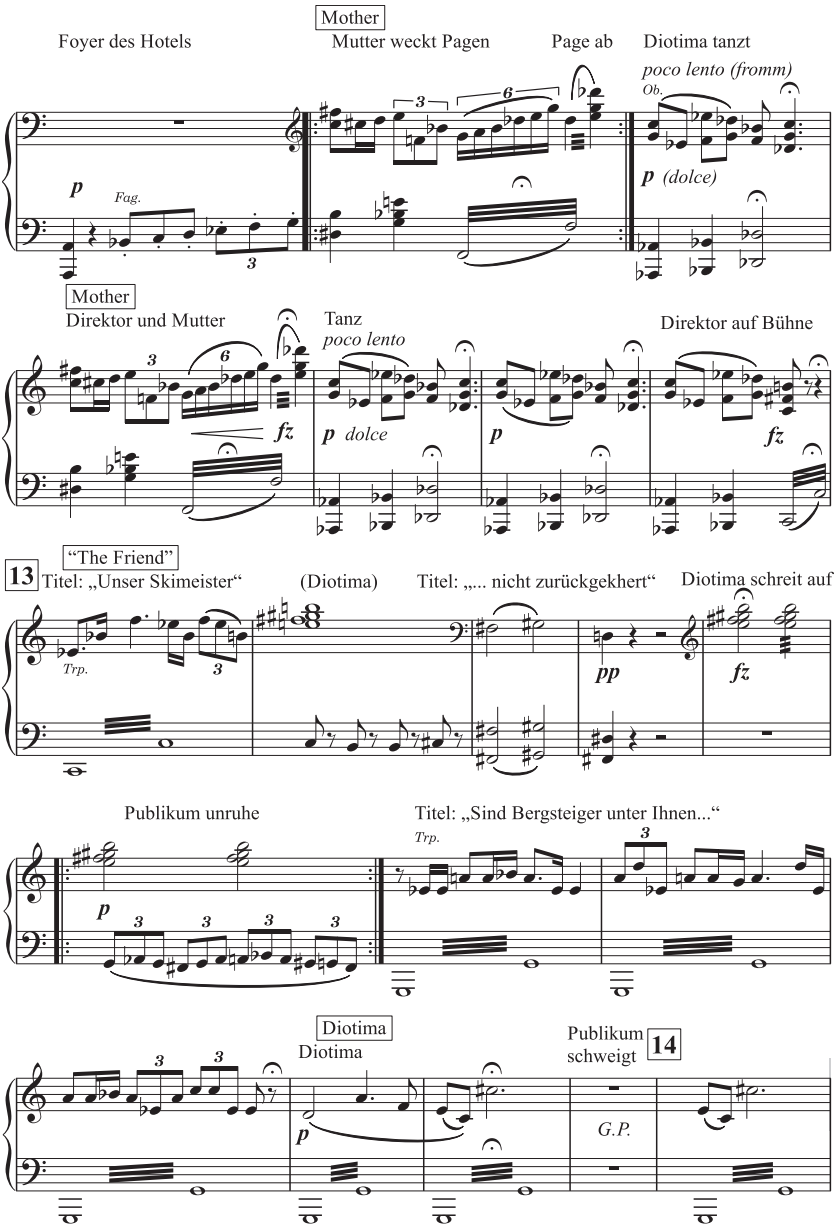


Figure 7.4 (continued)

(continued)

Titel: „Wer geht hinauf?“ Publikum Titel: „Meinetwegen!“ Publikum

G.P. G.P.

Diotima ab Publikum Diotima zieht sich um

Schatten der Mutter näher und näher anklagend:

15

p *pp* *fz*

Titel: „War Dir der Eine nicht genug?“

Trp. *f* *fp* *(pizz.)* 16 *(Fag.)*

Vigo

„Der Andere, das war ...“

p *espr.*

Figure 7.4 From Act VI, pages 76–8, of Edmund Meisel's *Der heilige Berg* (piano score)

Source: Reproduced by permission of the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt am Main/Musikarchiv.

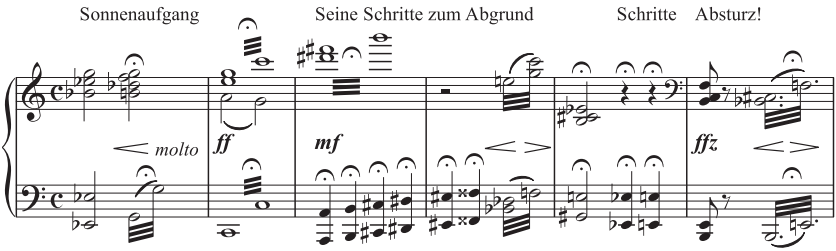


Figure 7.5 From Act VIII, page 90, of Edmund Meisel's *Der heilige Berg* (piano score)
Source: Reproduced by permission of the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt am Main/Musikarchiv.

Background Scoring

Meisel's background scoring is of two distinct types: ostinati and leitmotifs. Instances of his simple ostinati, typically rising through chromatic steps, can be seen in Figure 7.3, starting at bar 7 (as tension develops between the two climbers stuck on the precipice) and starting seven bars before rehearsal mark 5 (as the older climber looms menacingly towards Vigo, causing him to stumble over the edge). Simpler still is that for the older climber's mother as she approaches Diotima's hotel room, where she is first seen through the open doorway as a looming shadow (see Figure 7.4, starting at rehearsal mark 15). These ostinati were hallmarks of Meisel's *Potemkin* style, similar to the seemingly endless rising sequence (lasting over several minutes) associated with the battleship's engines as it sailed valiantly towards the squadron.

His leitmotifs are generally short and simplistic in their design, using age-old musical gestures to reflect the characteristics of the person, object, or abstract idea through appropriate trajectories and contours. For example, the opening motif of the score – named 'Fate' by Meisel – encapsulates the tragic denouement of the narrative through descending fragments of chromatic and whole-tone scales played over a plodding bass line that outlines a descending tritone. This motif can be seen in Figure 7.4 (rehearsal mark 10), accompanying the mother as she discovers the message her son has chalked on the outside of her front door, 'Gone with Vigo to conquer the north face of the mountain.' Predictably, 'The Friend' has a heroic trumpet fanfare (see Figure 7.1, bar 7), while the 'Mountain' motif rises through some rudimentary augmented harmonies to a peak of bright A-flat major (see Figure 7.1, two bars before rehearsal mark 20), Vigo has a brightly optimistic waltz (see Figure 7.4, last four bars), and Diotima's theme is full of undulating, seductive melodic contours (see Figure 7.3, four bars after rehearsal mark 3, for three bars).[28] The doomed relationship between 'The Friend' and Diotima is also made explicit in the tritone opposition between their themes' respective tonal areas, A-flat major and D major/minor.

Meisel mirrors Fanck's flimsy plot and meagre character development with themes that generally return with little variation aside from minimal tonal alterations and truncations to fit the available timings for every significant appearance of, or reference to, the associated referent. Royal S. Brown termed this use of leitmotifs as 'motivic mickey-mousing.'[29] Meisel's declaration that the themes for the three main characters are 'all intertwined' does not withstand close examination.[30] The reality is much simpler and usually involves close juxtaposition and alternation of thematic blocks to match the director's editing. This is demonstrated in the opening of Figure 7.4, where, beginning at the third bar, there is a chain of motifs in quick succession as the older climber's mother – at home – goes to the door after the storm blows it open and discovers his chalked message. First, there is the mother's motif (and a sound effect for the door blowing open), followed by the motifs for 'Fate' (as she reads the message), the 'Mountain' (Fanck includes a gratuitous shot of the mountain), then back to the mother's motif as she prepares to fetch help. Finally, the action switches to the dancer's dressing room at the hotel and Diotima's motif. The exchange of musical ideas is perhaps at its most monotonous in Act VI when Meisel slavishly follows Fanck's repetitive cross-cutting between the two climbers in peril on the precipice and Diotima at the hotel performing a routine ('Dance to Joy') that she had created especially for her beloved. (This section of music occurs between Figures 7.3 and 7.4.) Here, Meisel's score alternates between the clichéd chromatic descent of the three-note 'Precipice' theme (see Figure 7.3, beginning four bars after rehearsal mark 1) and a single identical bar of 'dance' music, repeated as necessary, for the hotel shots.[31]

Conclusions

What is immediately apparent from even a cursory glance at Figures 7.3 and 7.4 is that Meisel adopted a rather crude sectional approach to his scoring, creating his musical narrative from small units of thematic material and ostinati sequences, interspersed with the foreground elements discussed. Undoubtedly, his compositional prowess at this stage lacked finesse, particularly an ability to devise seamless transitions between musical ideas. Instead, Meisel – himself a skilled conductor – relied on caesuras at the end of each idea and 'repeat until' indications to join his ideas. This looks worse on the page than when performed, where a more flexible *rubato* style results.

There is no one aspect of Meisel's score for which similar examples could not be found in many other silent film scores. Yet while other composers did incorporate some sound effects and surrogate vocalisations and made similar efforts to delineate diegetic music-making or devised a leitmotif-based score, few tried to do everything within one score to the same extent. The score must have tested the skill and stamina of many a contemporaneous music director, striving to achieve such precise and frequent synchronisation during live performance for an extended length of time – and without the aid of any

mechanical means.[32] (It is still quite a feat today with all the modern digital technology at a conductor's disposal. By comparison, sound film composers have it relatively easy: their scores have always been recorded in small chunks – initially limited by the size of a reel – and spliced together.) Meisel's score deserves wider recognition; in many ways, it is a more important landmark in the development of sound film than his more famous *Potemkin* music, as it more closely resembles the fashion for 'wall-to-wall' close narrative scoring in Hollywood's golden age.

Notes

1 Michael Slowik, *After the Silents: Hollywood Film Music in the Early Sound Era, 1926–1934* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 37, 56.
2 Ibid., 73.
3 This chapter has been adapted and revised from Fiona Ford, 'The Film Music of Edmund Meisel, 1896–1930' (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 2011), accessed 2 January 2017, http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/12271/.
4 'Agitprop' is a term derived from agitation and propaganda; in this instance, it denotes a highly politicised style of left-wing theatre that originated in 1920s Europe.
5 Trenker's character is not named in the German original, but is referred to as 'Der Freund' or 'Er'.
6 Jürgen Trimborn, *Leni Riefenstahl: A Life*, trans. Edna McCown (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 35.
7 Werner Sudendorf, ed. *Der Stummfilmmusiker Edmund Meisel*, Kinematograph Nr. 1, Schriftenreihe Des Deutschen Filmmuseum Frankfurt (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Filmmuseum, 1984), 20.
8 Edmund Meisel, 'Film-Musik', *Film-Kurier*, 19 September 1925; E. M. [Edmund Meisel], 'Die ideale Filmpartitur', *Film-Kurier*, 10 October 1925.
9 The next two feature films he scored – *Berlin* and *October* – also had non-traditional narrative structures.
10 Edmund Meisel, 'Wie schreibt man Filmmusik?', *Ufa-Magazin*, 1–7 April 1927. Reproduced in Sudendorf, *Der Stummfilmmusiker Edmund Meisel*, 58–60.
11 Ibid.
12 At this point, the film was around 14 per cent shorter than its original length.
13 Kino Video K307, 2003; also Eureka EKA40072, 2004.
14 After the Ufa-Palast was expanded in 1925, it had an orchestra of 75 players. See Kurt Pinthus, 'Ufapalast', *Das Tage-Buch*, 3 October 1925. Reproduced in *The Promise of Cinema: German Film Theory, 1907–1933*, ed. Anton Kaes, Nicholas Baer, and Michael Cowan, trans. Christopher M. Geissler (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 170–2.
15 Edmund Meisel, *Der heilige Berg: Originalkomposition zu dem gleichnamigen Kulturfilm der Ufa, Klavierauszug* (Berlin: Universum-Film A.-G., 1927). There is a copy at the Deutsches Filminstitut, Frankfurt. Working for UFA at least guaranteed that Meisel's music was printed for hire purposes and UFA cinemas throughout Germany would have been encouraged (but not compelled) to perform it alongside the film. Hence, it is impossible to assess the extent of its dissemination beyond the premiere run.
16 The German conductor Helmut Imig made an orchestral reconstruction of Meisel's piano score in the late 1980s to accompany a surviving black-and-white film print (the original was tinted). He recorded an abridgement of this reconstruction in 1990, released on CD (edel 0029062EDL, 1995). Imig has

since reworked his earlier reconstruction for live performance with the restored print made in 2001, as, for example, at the annual international Mountain Film Festival in Trento, Italy, in April 2010. For an interview with the conductor prior to this performance, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbC9YX8S6BE (accessed 8 November 2016). Unfortunately, this new reconstruction has not been recorded for commercial release.

17 Meisel, *Der Heilige Berg*, 24.

18 Summarised from Jürgen Trimborn, 'A Successful Outsider: Leni Riefenstahl's Career before Hitler', in *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Christiane Schönfeld and Carmel Finnan (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006), 153–70.

19 'Dream Blossom' was allegedly inspired by Anna Pavlova's famous 'Dying Swan' routine. See Leni Riefenstahl, *A Memoir* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 37.

20 This is an assumption. Reviews and sundry information about her dance routines mention composer names but rarely the specific names of pieces. See Peggy Ann Wallace, 'An Historical Study of the Career of Leni Riefenstahl from 1923 to 1933' (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1975), Appendix A; Trimborn, *Leni Riefenstahl*, 22–3.

21 I was able to achieve a near-perfect synchronisation by matching the end of track 2 from Imig's CD recording with the relevant footage in the DVD print for this dance.

22 In all of the music examples in this chapter, any obvious errors in Meisel's printed score have been corrected by the author without further comment. All recurring thematic material is indicated via boxed text.

23 This last section is supposition, based on the presence of the action description '(Mutter)' and Diotima's motifs. There is no corroborating footage in the DVD print at this point.

24 No. 16 Prelude lirico/Vorspiel zum Drama' in Giuseppe Becce, *Kinothek: Neue Filmmusik* Vol. IIA (Berlin-Lichterfelde/Leipzig: Schlesinger, 1921).

25 Apart from some mocking oboe interjections, the melody is unblemished, suggesting that the distortion was improvised.

26 All intertitles in the music examples have been prefaced by the German term 'Titel' for clarity, even though this term is not used consistently throughout the printed score.

27 This was deduced by comparing the score's musical narrative with the restored print.

28 Diotima also has a second part to her theme, which is sometimes used separately. See the first two bars of Figure 7.2.

29 This was in relation to Korngold's score for *The Sea Hawk* (Michael Curtiz, 1940). See Royal S. Brown, *Overtones and Undertones: Reading Film Music* (London: University of California Press, 1994), 107–8.

30 Meisel, 'Wie schreibt man Filmmusik?'.

31 The 'Precipice' theme is a malleable thematic cell similar to Steiner's motif for the eponymous ape in *King Kong* (Merian C. Cooper, 1933).

32 During rehearsals for his *Berlin* score in the latter half of 1927, Meisel had the opportunity to experiment with Carl Robert Blum's Musik-Chronometer. This was an electrical tachometer that, when coupled to the film projector, enabled music to be exactly replicated in live performance according to predetermined tempi. Despite advance press notices to the contrary, Meisel later admitted that he did not use the apparatus during the public performances of *Berlin*. The equipment had broken down frequently and he was forced to abandon its use altogether during the dress rehearsal. See Edmund Meisel, 'In eigener Sache,' *Film-Kurier*, 3 July 1928; reproduced in Sudendorf, *Der Stummfilmmusiker Edmund Meisel* , 70–1.

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Part IV

Synchronisation and Scoring

Contemporary Reworkings

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Chapter 8

Carl Davis Interview

Simon Trezise

ST: How would you describe yourself as a composer?

CD: I can't really. There are composers who would say they write string quartets, symphonies, and concertos, and are writing for concerts, but I spread myself across the whole gamut. I see myself primarily as a composer, yet I'm the same guy who's writing the theme for *The World at War* as the one writing a Badedas commercial. It's the same; I don't have a persona; I just go for it. And I think that if you work in media, there is a sort of credo, which is you're brought in to perform a service, and the service is to help the film, be the appropriate music for the film. There is a kind of innate modesty at my end. I always say that in the film business, you can't have an ego: they're not doing it for you; you're doing it for them. Whatever 'them' is. I like to think it's the product, the thing we're all working towards. You always have to have that focus: you are just one part of the experience. It's always very hard to talk about and pin down.

ST: Is there a sort of template for becoming a film composer?

CD: There are no rules or plans for working in film. The path to a career, for instance, is very varied and isn't something that's organised in the sense that a scientific career might be. This is what I say to young musicians who want to break in. As for my background, I was born in 1936, so you could say I'm rooted in the 1930s. My chief experience of filmgoing began in 1940 when I started being taken to the movies. That gives me quite a different perspective to those who are either older than me, who might remember something of the silents, or as you go through the decades, people who started in the 1950s or 1960s. The new cinema for me was the *nouvelle vague* or Cinerama. There is always this in talking to me, the long perspective.

Oddly enough, in Long Island Schull [Fastnet Film Festival, 13 May 2017], for the first time in maybe nearly 40 years, I'm actually going to improvise to a film, which I'm rather looking forward to.

ST: On the piano?

CD: Yes, I'm going to improvise for a feature, a marvellous film, *The Goose Woman* [Clarence Brown,1925], which I didn't know at all. It didn't even crop up in the *Hollywood* series [*Hollywood: A Celebration of the American Silent Film*, Thames Television, directed by Kevin Brownlow and David Gill, 1980], so I saw it for the first time last night and it's stunning. Absolutely stunning. It could be a contemporary film. It's very strong and well crafted, with a fabulous central performance, all tied into music, because the principal figure is an opera singer who retired because she had had an illegitimate child. Having this child ruined her life, her career. At one point, she listens to a recording of herself singing an aria. It's not made clear what it is, but there are only two possibilities. One of her great successes was singing Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* [Wagner], so it can be either the opening of the second act, 'Dich teure Halle', or the prayer in the third. Given the way she is emoting, it's more likely 'Dich teure Halle', which is very dramatic and declamatory (the prayer is very sustained).

ST: So you're going to play it?

CD: I think the first thing I'll do is get out my *Tannhäuser* score [laughs] and make myself a copy of it and use that for the principle theme. Immediately there's a clue, a starting point. I'm just going to improvise, but I hope one day I can actually compose a full score.

ST: Is this how you usually start a project?

CD: You wait for a door to open. You're called on to write music for a film and then you're going to see it for the first time, preferably screened for you. What unites the whole experience about what you're doing for these films, whether they're silent or contemporary or animated, is you're endeavouring to help this film be effective. What people are going to hear will give them information about the film: is it tragedy, comedy, sci fi, or adventure? Does it have extra levels relating to the period of the subject? Is it set in the 1920s? Is it set in the future? What country is it set in? So, you find yourself responding as a composer to all this information. You watch the film with your mind completely open and you respond intuitively to the work. Then what follows is your interpretation, which of course your colleagues may disagree with. The question of ego? You clean up the pieces later after it's done. You are part of a team, with colleagues making an equal contribution. We're all working towards the same goal of making the film effective.

ST: How do you approach the early scenes of a film, e.g. the prologue of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* [Rex Ingram, 1921], before the main themes and character of the work have been established?

CD: There are two levels to my score for *The Four Horsemen*. It's very complex. I grew up in New York, where I stayed until the end of 1959. I'm crazy about ballet and I've written a lot of ballet scores. I really enjoy working with dancers and the whole crazy world of ballet. The big thing

for me is dance. One of the great things in 1950 was the arrival in New York of the Sadler's Wells Ballet. They did a couple of triple bills. One was a wartime ballet, first done at the start of the war [1940, arranged for piano and orchestra by Constant Lambert], called *Dante Sonata*, which used a Liszt piano piece called 'After a Lecture of Dante';[1] it was very tortured, then heroic, and so on. It was about hell. Frederick Ashton had done this really Duncanesque or Grahamesque ballet barefoot – it wasn't classical ballet. I was very struck with it; everyone was. It had this sense of reality, of the war happening to England, and it was important, because it simply was not like a ballet.

Cut to 1992 when we did *The Four Horsemen*. The producer of the *Hollywood* series was David Gill [1928–1997], who in his earlier life had been a dancer in the Sadler's Well Ballet. He came to me with *Four Horsemen* and suggested that when we see the theme of the four horsemen, we look at the *Dante Sonata* music. It is in the tradition of silent film anyway to use whatever music is available; it didn't matter what genre it was: film music then was completely universal, completely eclectic. It has a huge span of subject matter. My first inspiration was that the primary theme would call on the Liszt ballet and our memories of it.

So, you have that element and know how the myth of the four horsemen pervades the entire film. It's going to be the pillar of my structure. Now we have the story of our leading man, Julio (Rudolph Valentino), and it starts in Argentina. He is always Argentinian. OK, it's Paris, it's Germany, and so on, but through it all as a counter-theme to the Liszt is the tango: Julio's theme.[2] When we first see him in a seedy tango bar, he performs what became his signature characterisation, which is a tango dance. That theme, which I created, follows him to the end, so now you have two themes to work with. The opening of the film is tango-based. For the death of the father, it turns into one of those sad South American laments.

ST: The co-editor of this project, Ruth Barton, is the authority on Rex Ingram, who's Irish.

CD: How wonderful. On my first visit to Dublin, I conducted *The Four Horsemen* with the radio orchestra, the little one (they expanded it for me). Since then, it's been repeated, though they didn't invite me to conduct it.

ST: That's a shame.

CD: Bastards. [laughs]

ST: Why haven't we got a DVD of it?

CD: I'm subject to the vagaries of Turner/MGM and what they will release and what they won't. I'm amazed that they don't have at least a video of it. Keep looking. We're working through on the DVDs. You think from outside it's so organised, but it's not. It's very spread, very responsive to the market, and now piracy is so easy. For years and years, we'd been

saying, 'If only we could have the *Hollywood* series', which was the mother of it all back in 1980. But there was this massive problem that there were hundreds of sources for the film material and they were licensed for a tiny amount of time, so what do we do? I then discovered it's all on YouTube! The whole series. At that moment, I closed down. I shut the cash register. Why bother?[3]

ST: How do you account for a composer like yourself. You write memorable, effective music, but at the same time it is heavily indebted to composers like Schubert (the String Quintet for Darcy and Elizabeth's famous meeting at Pemberley in the BBC dramatisation of 1995)?

CD: When they really want to insult me, they call me a pastiche composer.

ST: I think that's missing something . . .

CD: What you're doing is mimicking. Quite simply. It's a funny mind game I play. If we take *Pride and Prejudice* as a subject for discussion, I didn't get a BAFTA nomination for it, because the little group of composers who are the judges thought it sounded too much like the real thing. I thought that was interesting, because it doesn't directly quote from Haydn or Mozart, but I wanted it to sound as if it were by them. I had to ask myself, 'What's the theme of *Pride and Prejudice*?' We know that Jane Austen's principal theme in most of her novels is the dialogue between heart and mind: as a woman, do you marry for love or do you marry to gain your life, so to speak? So, there would be two themes, a fast theme and a sustained one. How would I find them? Possibly in any sonata movement, where you find the two [principal theme, subsidiary theme], so I could have gone stalking my way through endless piano sonatas of Haydn or Mozart. How delightful! The novel's at that interesting phase around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. So all these things are going through my mind as I sit down with a blank piece of paper. Then you start wondering about colour and so on, and I think what about a fortepiano? Nobody's used a fortepiano. At that time, Melvyn Tan was the most conspicuous choice, a fabulous player.

ST: Does carping criticism bother you?

CD: I take it in my stride. I'm not going to stop, and if something needs to sound Wagnerian in a film like *Ben-Hur* [*Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*, Fred Niblo, 1925], there's a pass. This is all about sounding like someone. The question is how much attention do you give to critics? They're doing their job. They are endeavouring to describe to a public what it was like and what they thought about it. Even perhaps the most respected figure is saying there are bits that sound like Wagner or Ravel or Gershwin or whatever. There's hardly a notice of any new composition in which the derivations are not laid open for you. The telltale thing in criticism now, which always puts me off, is when they describe a piece as glittering. Well, I can do 'glittering'. It's easy. You go for glittering instruments like celeste, vibraphone, and harp. One, two, three – glittering! The question is how

persistently this fashionable sound comes up. You have to understand these things, otherwise you can't mentally survive.

Going back historically, how much does Bach sound like Vivaldi? Mozart sounds like Haydn? You've got to start somewhere. You have the odd composer that seems to spring from nowhere in their world – someone like Berlioz. He does stuff that really sounds only like him, which is what people really like. It doesn't sound like anybody else. Sometimes a composer's style is a shorthand. In the 1930s, Aaron Copland invented a sound which I don't think is derived from anything before. It seems to express prairie, the West – a kind of America in a good way. And that has now become a byword for sounding American and expressing its grandeur and asceticism. So, you know that you can sound New Worldly using certain chords, certain rhythms, and so on. In my ears, of course, it sounds like Copland. And then perhaps Wagner and Strauss are the biggest influences on the symphonic John Williams of the space movies.

ST: What about *The Thief of Bagdad* [Raoul Walsh, 1924]?

CD: Well, there's very little of me in that!

ST: But it still sounds composed by a composer (other than Rimsky).

CD: Well, I thought Rimsky-Korsakov was a very good film composer. Fairbanks Senior [writer] used a composer called Mortimer Wilson [1876–1932]. He scored *The Thief of Bagdad*. When we came to the point in 1985 where Brownlow, Gill, and I were asking what we'd do for the year, we chose *The Thief*. We had access to a gorgeous print and it was in the days when they still had a pretty large budget. In the *Hollywood* series, we used Fairbanks on his magic carpet, creating this magic army with his magic dust, to symbolise the unstoppable rise of Hollywood during the First World War as the world dominator in the film business. At the time, based on the principle that in the silent period all music was considered available and usable, it popped into my head that the finale of *Scheherazade* would be a perfect match for that scene, so we used it. It's terrific.

We originally intended to do Mortimer Wilson's score. When they were doing the *Hollywood* series, I asked them to find me some money to look at the libraries and meet a few people. We are talking about the 1970s, so some of the old people were still around and playing. I went to the New York Public Library, the Library of Congress, which is huge for film, and LA, and met a few people. I saw the Wilson score and thought it didn't sound very Eastern. I just didn't think it had much character. Even so, we might have gone with it, but by then I had the experience of looting this chunk of *Scheherazade*, which I thought was magic. There were all sorts of reasons why this would benefit the project. First of all, the film is very influenced by Ballets Russes – it's Russians being oriental – so it's not real oriental. The whole thing had the feel of Ballets Russes. So, here we were with Ballets Russes and this thing based on *A Thousand-and-One Nights*.[4] I went to Kevin and David and said here's our dilemma: we can have a

rather unmemorable but efficient score that would be a whole reconstruction, but there's a case for going in another direction, because Rimsky's a fabulously tuneful composer and always conveys a mood. The only thing I couldn't find in Rimsky's music was something for the Mongol emperor. I couldn't find anything specifically pentatonic, Chinese-sounding. I'll have to write that and give you the five notes for him. I had Rimsky floor to ceiling in my studio [laughs] at that point, snipping and pasting. A cut-and-paste job. But I loved it and I'm actually going to do it again in May [2017] in Luxembourg. Come over! (Oddly enough, a hundred years later somebody did reconstruct Mortimer's score, with enormous difficulty, and was raving to me about it. I wish they wouldn't!)

ST: You do vary the Rimsky-Korsakov?

CD: Yes, it becomes the subject of a score rather than the score itself. Sometimes it's not quite doing what I need it to do, so I have to change it.

ST: It really works at a compositional level. Could you operate like this in sound film?

CD: Very often I'm asked the blunt question what's the difference between working for a silent film and working on a contemporary film. Basically, you have to understand with a silent film that you are the sound. A contemporary soundtrack has dialogue, it has sound effects, and it has music. The putting together of a soundtrack is the discussion of which element has prominence. It may be all three together or you may have no music at all. It may be sound and music mixed together, etc. That's the option, and you spend a lot of time sorting that out and trying out things. Very often you write a piece of music and it's dropped for one reason or another, perhaps because it's too interfering or not necessary. It seems to me that when you're doing the silent score, you write more fully, because you're providing the atmosphere for the setting, for the emotions; you have to bridge dialogue you can't hear or that you have to read. You get people starting a sentence, you cut to a title, you cut back. Somehow you've got to bridge all that. You are the whole story. Perhaps the best kind of scoring, which is so graphic, is Puccini. Puccini is the model of it, as is Wagner. Wagner is always telling you what you should think [laughs] and what the interior thoughts are. And Puccini picked that up within his own idiom, style, and subject matter. So, it seems to me that silent film followed directly on from verismo opera in what was required of it. It's harder if you say you're going to base it on Rimsky, but sometimes you just have to do it. The most extreme was the Erich von Stroheim film *The Wedding March* [1928], for which I threw in everything Viennese that I could, making Viennese music central, especially the Strausses. That's what the job is, and it appeals to me enormously.

ST: You obviously love the live aspect of it?

CD: Yes, that's the gift. It's an extraordinary experience of contact with the film. For instance, in the chariot race in *Ben-Hur* there's a moment when

they obviously dug a trench across the course, because there's a shot in which the chariots are going over your head. I devised a special cymbal crash as a climactic moment. I'm nearer to the screen than anyone in the audience; it's almost as if I have to duck to get out of the way. There are a couple of synchronisation moments which I'm particularly aiming for that are very thrilling if I can achieve them live.

ST: In *Ben-Hur*, you give stronger cues to the viewer than elsewhere, for example with the Dresden amen . . .

CD: Yes, that's because it has such melodrama. It's the least subtle of the films I've scored; it's a tract. You're really being told what to think. It's very specific because of its source. The novel had to have papal permission. It has that sort of overlay to it.

ST: It has Technicolor too for key religious moments.

CD: Yes, and my score has one associated quote, which is the Grail theme. People say it's Wagner, but it's not, it's by Gottlieb Naumann [1741–1801] and is called the Dresden amen. Mendelssohn uses it in his *Reformation* Symphony, which Wagner must have known, as he uses it in *Parsifal*. So, I thought it was right to use it, but it goes back to Naumann.

ST: If we could transport ourselves back to the time of the film, do you think audiences would have been similarly 'directed' musically?

CD: Well, interestingly enough, the big Hollywood studios did employ staff composers, so an original *Ben-Hur* score does exist, which Gillian Anderson performs. I did look at that. It was the experience of doing a lot of clips from the film in the *Hollywood* series that had already given me the Dresden amen idea, and I'd done some of the race, which was based on the same metre as the original score. But the problem of the original score is that it is so eclectic: it is such a mixture of Wagner, lots of Massenet, etc., and a little bit by the studio composer. One of the things I thought is that if we compare the situation at the start of radio or the gramophone with today, I am presupposing a great deal more musical literacy on the part of audiences now. If you, say, play the Ride of the Valkyries, which became notorious after Griffith used it as the theme for the Ku Klux Klan, chances are they're going to know what you're quoting. If you use a direct quote, you've got to know what you're doing. Everyone's going to be thinking 'Oh, *Birth of a Nation*, oh, *Apocalypse Now* [Francis Ford Coppola, 1979]'. There you are, it's very corny; people will recognise it. The music has associations you don't want. The use of a popular piece of music may have been fine in the 1920s, but now you can get any piece of composed or published music off the web. Anything. So, you have to suppose that people are going to know at least the more popular pieces. You have to be very careful not to intrude with an idea that is going to be distracting and possibly wrong. In something like *The Wedding March*, which von Stroheim himself described as a sort of love song to old Vienna, the Habsburg Vienna, I want the Strausses, but I'm not going to

play *The Blue Danube*; I'm not going to do the really obvious things. I'll find pieces that are a little off the beaten track. That's my philosophy.

ST: *Our Hospitality* [Buster Keaton, John G. Blystone, 1923] is one of my favourite scores. I don't associate it with anything specific. Am I right?

CD: Well, I wanted it to sound like Schubert, and also as a quirk, because it is a kind of action film in parts, I decided not to use any percussion. I did it for an ensemble of 18 players. It's a world of Schubert kind of thing. One quote I made is from the song *Die Forelle* [The Trout], just when he goes fishing. On the whole, I wanted to give it the feel of an extended piece of chamber music.

ST: So, you weren't otherwise quoting specific Schubert works.

CD: Not quoting, just the sound world; the idiom and the themes were sometimes reminiscent. It's such a charming piece. It's the very beginning of railway. Keaton was in love with trains, which reaches its climax with *The General* [Buster Keaton, Clyde Bruckman, 1926]. *The General* is interesting because I had to think about how music is used in a very practical sense. I'd already done quite a bit of research on military music and realised that you had to imagine a world before gramophones and television, the world of live music before the electronic age. From time immemorial, music is used to give you information in the military world: fall out, attack, attention, relax, reverse, whatever, soldiers had to be quite musical. There were no walkie-talkies; they had to learn all this stuff. I became very aware that in something like *The General*, the war was basically being conducted by trumpet: you've got to have the right signals. Also by song. There are very specific songs created for the North, or adapted for the North, and totally different repertoire for the South. So, one of the functions of the music was to tell you who was fighting who, which side had stolen the train, and which side had found it again. And then there's a whole mistaken identity thing, because the Keaton character Johnny puts on a northern uniform in order to escape. Then he gets to the southern side and he's shot at, so he quickly changes uniform to his original one. It means the music is so functional. Even something like *Napoléon* [Abel Gance, 1927], primitively, the English are fighting the French. It's very hard to see. It's night-time, it's raining, it's very difficult to see who's fighting who. *The Marseillaise* is going to be for the French and *Rule Britannia* is going to be for the English grenadiers. There, the score helps you see who's fighting who. It was quite a pleasure to do that research for the *The General*. We were in LP days and I got hold of a Civil War collection. The liner notes told the story of an excavation of Gettysburg, one of the key battles the American Civil War. They were excavating the field and found band parts in the mud. It was the most mixed bag. There was a potpourri from *The Masked Ball* [Verdi] and the Overture to *Der Freischütz* [Weber]. This might have been on the piano of a silent film pianist. From a safe hillside, they were playing

music to galvanise their forces. They were the background score to the battle and were playing what was current in the 1860s.

ST: So, they might have fought to Weber or Suppé.

CD: [sings a passage from *Der Freischütz*] This mixture of it is so strange when you think about it.

ST: You do read in accounts of American theatre in the nineteenth century that they mixed the most incongruous elements, like a Victorian ballad or a comic song in a Shakespeare tragedy.

CD: It was what was to hand. I kind of respect that. My credo in this is that I have to respect the material. There is a school of performance which I feel exploits the film for the sake of contemporary expression or interpretation. I feel it's in conflict with the film, or we could say the film's being used for a kind of propaganda purpose for which it wasn't meant. In my world, what I hope to do when I perform or compose for these films is to respect the time it was done, just as they would be respecting costume, set design, with a kind of authenticity, except where occasionally the film's director's trying to make a more universal point, even though there is a period setting. I'm thinking of a film called *Greed* [1924] by von Stroheim.[5] For that, I feel I can go into the contemporary world compositionally. It can be very dissonant and far beyond what you would have had at the time. I feel that's valid, because we lose the sense that it's got to belong to the 1870s or whatever.

ST: There is a French film based on the Folie Bergères, *La revue des revues* [Joe Francis, 1927] that uses a contemporary jazz ensemble with electric bass [Taranta-Babu!], even though the setting is very evidently the 1920s, right down to the dance styles.

CD: If you do the cancan, it has to be Offenbach, so we're in the 1850s or 1860s. They're probably still playing Offenbach now. There's a big dance sequence in *Wings* [William A. Wellman, 1927]. I don't think they used my score, but the recent DVD/Blu-ray release of it in the Masters of Cinema series uses a 1920s score by Zamecnik with sound effects by Ben Burtt.

ST: It's a compilation score? It's got long sequences of Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in it.

CD: [sings appropriate passage] For the aeroplanes?

ST: Yes, that's it. Then you can switch to an organ soundtrack by the veteran player Gaylord Carter. And speaking of aircraft, what about sound effects?

CD: The question of sound effects is very interesting. My model is the first reconstruction, which is Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* [1931].[6] In the films he did after this, it is curious how selective he is. Sometimes he does something very physical, but mostly he just wanted music. If somebody's firing a gun, you don't need to hear it [claps his hands]. You know what it sounds like. In *The Wind* [Victor Sjöström, 1928], I really wanted to create a violent sound musically, have the audience pinned back, like you're

really caught up in a twister or big sandstorm – that sort of sensation. It's very interesting how restrained the effects are in a Chaplin film that he's scored himself.

ST: Do you think that's probably reflective of mainstream practice in the 1920s at least?

CD: It depends on where you're seeing it. If you were actually going into the West End or Champs Elysées or Times Square, you're going to see a film with an orchestra; at the top level, there would be a team producing sound effects behind the screen. They'd be waiting with their gun. And many of the more ambitious films, like *The Big Parade* [King Vidor, 1925], issued a sound effects guide. They exist at the top level, but even in the suburbs there'd be very few with just a piano. I've seen all sorts of correspondence of what it was like to be in a theatre.

ST: I have a couple of general questions to end with. Do you have a favourite score that you regard as your best achievement?

CD: I've a few that I think are very good. One I've only once had an opportunity to do live, but it does exist in the complete MGM Garbo box; it's *A Woman of Affairs* [Clarence Brown, 1928]. That's again Liszt-based. I think *Flesh and the Devil* [Clarence Brown, 1926] is wonderful too. I think *The General* is very well handled. *The Crowd* [King Vidor, 1928] is great fun. *Napoléon*, of course, is very important. That's my mega . . .

ST: Five hours!

CD: Five-and-a-half hours in the new one. My eightieth birthday gift to myself. I'm very fond of the Mutuals of Chaplin that I scored [1916–1917].

ST: Generally speaking, what aspect of your career are you most proud of?

CD: I am most proud of one thing: before we did *Napoléon*, 20 July 1980, where or how would you have seen a silent film? When I came to London in 1960, I could see them at the NFT [National Film Theatre]. That was always with a pianist. Sometimes it was passable, sometimes it was horrible. But you were watching someone play piano for hours. Maybe at a film-minded university or college, you might have the occasional screening with somebody playing. You could see Chaplin commercially. What was achieved in 1980 with the premiere of *Napoléon* to 1,100 people, a capacity audience at the Empire Leicester Square (originally a silent film cinema), was everyone got a fantastic, unique film, accompanied by a large orchestra – well, Beethoven-sized – to a score that was not being improvised, but was actually created or selected for the film. So, they were seeing it synchronised, as far as I was able to do it with no experience whatsoever. It electrified the audience. That afternoon, a radio critic called Sue Summers yelled across a crowded room to Jeremy Isaacs, who at that point was just putting together Channel 4: 'You are going to do something about this, Jeremy, aren't you?' So, he responded by saying that day to all and sundry (I think David Gill was present to hear it) that he would commission a series of restorations of the silent film classics by

Thames television, which would be with David and Kevin [Brownlow] and new scores by Carl Davis. That enabled what was intended to be a one-off occasion to have wings. David and Kevin then went to the US studios, because the focus was going to be on Hollywood films (even though *Napoléon* was as far from being a Hollywood film as you can imagine), to lease the films, to say we would like to do these new versions with new scores and get the best possible prints, and so on. So, we started on this fantastic 20-year orgy. In 2000, Channel 4 cut the connection and said they didn't want to do any more. That was a shame, because it was like somebody had let go of the balloon and we were off into the stratosphere. But by that time, I personally had carried the bulk of the commissions. We had produced a huge repertoire of films in a practical form that could be hired and played. In 1984, there was a competition at the Alte Oper in Frankfurt, of just silent film scores or silent film productions that had been made just for TV. There were 40-odd entries! Within so few years. So now it's a thriving industry. I have competitors. We compete. This is what happened.

ST: An astonishing achievement. Carl Davis, thank you very much indeed.

Notes

1 'Après une lecture de Dante: Fantasia quasi Sonata', 1849, published in volume 2 of *Années de pèlerinage*, 1856.
2 The tango is a South American dance originating in the 1880s on the border between Argentina and Uruguay.
3 The series is still there as of August 2017.
4 Ballets Russes (1909–1929) staged *Scheherazade* in 1910.
5 Premiere with Davis's score: Edinburgh, 1986.
6 Carl Davis writes in an email: 'The idea of celebrating Chaplin's 100th anniversary in 1989 was conceived in 1988 by David Gill and Kevin Brownlow. Their reasoning was that as the substantial production work was done in 1928, Chaplin's concept for the film was still to be "silent" accompanied by live music. By 1930 it was clear to all concerned that sound film was here to stay and he had the idea of recording a score, but in essence it is a silent film with title cards. The scores and parts were in the Chaplin vaults in Geneva and were conscientiously for the most part photocopied for me by Chaplin's then manager, Pam Poumier, and sent to me in London. This was the basis of the "first reconstruction" and was premiered in London in March 1989. The success of these performances led to reconstructions of the *Gold Rush* [1925], *The Kid* [1921], and *The Idle Class* [1921]. Subsequent to this Timothy Brock became interested in transcribing *Modern Times* [1936], which he did with great success and subsequently he prepared scores of all of Chaplin's recorded scores, including his own versions of the four films that I had worked on earlier. As far as I know the 1989 version is the first reconstruction for live performance.'

Chapter 9

Scenes from Ozu

Ed Hughes

Between 2009 and 2013, I was commissioned by the BFI to provide musical soundtracks to 12 silent films from the period 1929–1934 by the Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu (1903–1963). These films range from surviving fragments of larger works (where some reels had been lost, perhaps irretrievably), to a short melodrama of 45 minutes, to several feature-length silent films of around 90 minutes preserved and digitally remastered. This was for the 'Ozu Collection', an extended BFI project to release all Ozu's films on DVD and Blu-ray, carried out in collaboration with Ozu's Japanese studio, Shochiku, a theatrical and motion picture company still functioning today.[1] A mark of these BFI editions was the high quality of production, extending to liner notes with high-resolution black-and-white production stills and contributions from leading film curators and scholars. The producers at the BFI at the time, Sam Dunn and Sonia Mullett, further extended this concern for quality to the musical contribution by ensuring high-quality audio and creating space in the booklets for short articles on the specially composed music, in addition to scholarly commentaries.

It had been a live performance of my original score to Ozu's *I Was Born, But . . .* (1932) that was noticed by the BFI and led to the invitation to work on the silents in the Ozu Collection. The process of composing and producing these new soundtracks for DVD involved defining and fixing musical cues in ways that were qualitatively different from the live music and silent film practices in which I had engaged since 2001.[2]

Writing music for *I Was Born, But . . .* was also my own first contact with Ozu's work. I was introduced to this film by the Bath Film Festival, and invited to compose a new score for an ensemble of live musicians to perform at the 2002 Bath Film Festival. I studied the film on a VHS tape, and then on the BFI archive's 16 mm copy. This print was used to project the film in the Assembly Rooms in Bath before an audience of about 200 with a mixed live ensemble of Western classical instruments. Timings were approximate and the conductor, Patrick Bailey, managed the flow and pauses between scenes with great skill (and no click track). Although different from the discipline of making a synchronised soundtrack for fixed media, this initial experience sensitised me

to Ozu's narrative style and approach to locations, which privileges domestic spaces. This led me to develop a method in which musical episodes match *spaces* (rather than attaching musical tunes or leitmotifs to characters, as is more typical in standard Western film music practices). I found that my scores for these films tended to adopt a classical approach to musical structure, corresponding, I was later to discover, to comparisons with classical music found in the critical writing of Donald Richie, the American film historian and commentator on Ozu's cinema:

> If the film itself is often circular, the sequence is almost invariably so. It consists of three kinds of shots . . . the long shot, the medium shot, the close-up . . . Each shot has its place within the Ozu sequence . . . Musically this form is analogous to the aba pattern[3] . . . one of the most immediate and satisfying formal experiences possible by reason (in films as in music) of its firm apprehensibility and perhaps also, though this is more metaphysical, by reason of its circularity.[4]

Ozu developed his visual language through silent cinema productions at Shochiku. His first talkie was not until *The Only Son* in 1936, which includes a Western-style musical overture by Senji Itô. The BFI's project to release on disc every one of Ozu's films thus included many silent films. In order to avoid releasing these films mute, which is not their normal practice, the BFI decided to commission me to complete 'exclusive' scores for the set of silent films within the 'Ozu Collection'. As well as helping audiences appreciate the structures of the films, including drama, climaxes, and patterns, a further motivation in these releases, which came up in discussions with BFI producers and Shochiku, was to help modern British audiences understand and relate to their themes.

Furthermore, Japan's early twentieth-century screenings were not silent; it seems they were typically accompanied by a small ensemble (comprising a mix of traditional Japanese and modern Western instruments), and by the *benshi*, whose job was to interpret the images and dialogue through live spoken narrative.[5] Ozu's films were therefore not conceived as completely silent productions, and their preoccupation with visual patterning (influenced by American films of the period) is certainly brought out through appropriately scored musical rhythms.

In this chapter, I describe the process of creating modern soundtracks that are not pastiche mock-ups of how these films might have sounded with local Japanese live ensembles of the 1930s. Instead, I argue that the music can match the swift changes in mood and temporal ellipses characteristic of Ozu's cinema by allowing my inevitably Western orientation and musical language to acquire certain features that might be called 'Ozu-esque'. Thus, while my new, specially synchronised scores are not intended to change the experience and appreciation of his work, they do exist in these specially

packaged forms as extensions: Ozu-esque commentaries with clear functional purposes. Fascinatingly, contact between Western and non-Western forms of cultural production is clearly adumbrated in these early career films. For while Ozu may have been the most 'Japanese' of all film directors,[6] due to his interest in the lives of the Tokyo middle class, he was obsessed in this period (1929–1934) with Hollywood genre films of the day; the standout comedic routines of *I Was Born, But . . .* (1932), for example, are reminiscent of Chaplin and Keaton; the major Hollywood films of the period are quoted intertextually through posters on the walls of domestic and office interiors, and, in the case of *Woman of Tokyo* (1933), there is a direct quotation from the Ernst Lubitsch section of the anthology picture *If I Had a Million* (1932). Ozu remediated Hollywood and British gangster and comic movies in his time; the BFI Ozu Collection, which preserves and disseminates the films for contemporary viewers, also remediates Ozu through contact with, arguably, Ozu-esque contemporary music packaged with critical research and commentary.

In order to show what I mean by this, I will now discuss some of Ozu's most characteristic early career traits and then trace them through these silent films, while showing at the same time how they prompt my newly composed music by analogy to adopt and absorb Ozu-esque methods:

1 Limited use of locations. The locales in *I Was Born, But . . .* (1932) provide a very good example: the action moves between the home, the school, and the office; the effect of the double cycle (where the action reprises while the underlying themes darken) is made more poignant by the return to these spaces, timed and paced with geometric precision. Music can make this quality more palpable through recurrence associated with particular scenes.
2 Rhythmic editing which produces a choreography that draws attention to qualities intrinsic to the medium of film. I will highlight the visual patterning in *Walk Cheerfully* (1930) and the approach to composition that it suggested.
3 Ellipses. A feature in Ozu's work that steadily increases through the silent films is discontinuous time. Events in the story of *A Mother Should Be Loved* (1933) are accelerated by omitting the funeral of the father following the news of his death. We jump to the real topic of the film, which is the sons' complex relationship with their mother. Music in Western cinema typically works to support the illusion of continuity; here, the music serves the film by marking the disjunct approach to time, which first-time viewers can find puzzling.
4 Pillow shots. Moments so-termed by critic Noël Burch to describe the empty shots that punctuate beginnings, middles, and ends of Ozu's scenes.[7] The camera cuts away to an object such as a steaming kettle or a pair of gloves. The technique lends objectivity to scenes, drawing attention to the meticulously depicted environment and, temporarily, away

from human predicaments and concerns. This is suggestive in music of the use of silence between sections or movements, which creates the space for the better and more memorable articulation of the main themes (again, in contrast to the standard use of music in Western cinema, which typically effaces itself through its adherence to aesthetics of continuity).

Some Examples

The film *A Straightforward Boy* (1929) is the earliest in a series in the popular gangster genre. Most of the film is lost, but the essence of the film is conveyed in the 13 minutes that remain. It is a comedy about a pair of incompetent criminals and a child who runs rings around their attempt to kidnap him. The film stars Ozu regular Tatsuo Saitō, and boy star Tomio Aoki, both of whom were to appear in the later, more sophisticated comedy *I Was Born, But . . .* (1932). What remains of *A Straightforward Boy* has been restored from a rare 9.5 mm print. Although it is in poor condition and not complete, it is instructive to study because it does demonstrate Ozu's characteristically circumscribed use of locales, and in particular a spatial symmetry created in its starting point in the back alley from which the boy is initially 'kidnapped', to which he is eventually returned by the defeated kidnappers.

The film as it exists is in five sections, and the music responds to these five sections with five episodes. In classical music, an analytical shorthand is achieved by applying letter names to each section, such that symmetries and repetitions can be immediately perceived. A glance at Table 9.1 will reveal that this soundtrack is organised according to an ABCDA' plan, where A' is a complete repetition of the opening number, reflecting the return to the boy's home and the final routing of the kidnappers. The central C section music is in a more relaxed and moderate tempo and key than the outer sections, corresponding on the one hand to a point of relative calm in the film and also to the more abstract plan of many classical compositions. The music is different in its organisation from much film music in the way that it supplies complete sequences to match spatial continuity in Ozu's scenography. The music is, in this sense, Ozu-esque (see Example 1 in Table 9.1 and Figures 9.1–9.4).

In *I Was Born But . . .* (1932), the three principal actors of the earlier *A Straightforward Boy* (1929) take key roles: Tatsuo Saito becomes the father, Yoshii; Takeshi Sakamoto becomes Yoshii's boss; and the boy Tomio Aoki, by now known as Tokkan Kozo, takes the role of Yoshii's younger son, Keiji. Although *A Straightforward Boy* exists now as a fragment, and *I Was Born But . . .* is complete, it is still obvious that the latter is far more developed dramatically; it continues the humour but has a scale and pacing that deftly enables a nuanced development of darker themes, such as family loyalty, power relationships at work, and the way in which adult relationships are echoed in children's play. David Bordwell has analysed the film in terms of 'routines

Table 9.1 Example 1: outline of Ozu's *A Straightforward Boy* (1929) [music Ed Hughes, 2012][8]

Time	*Action*	*Music*	*Music type*
0′00″	A perfect day for a kidnapping; a backyard in Tokyo	A	Rhythmically energetic with cross-rhythms and slightly deviant harmonically
2′05″	Mocking Bunkichi; Senbo takes charge	B	Regular harmonies, irregular rhythms (5/8)
4′49″	Interior of the kidnappers; complacency	C	Transparent harmonically and rhythmically; slower tempo
8′06″	Senbo squirts the boss and infuriates him	D	Music of canons and offbeat rhythmic effects
11′00″	Return to the backyard; attempt to return the boy; his friends chase Bunkichi, also hoping for gifts	A'	Rhythmically energetic with cross-rhythms and slightly deviant harmonically; resolves
13′17″	END		

that can be replayed, reordered, and varied so as to create a dense web of similarities and contrasts' in a manner that is not only suggestive musically, but allows motifs to return in the darker and more developed second phase of the film.[9] The film is balanced and carefully paced, displaying a unity that again is attributable to its handful of key locations. This being the first 'Ozu' score I composed, I was drawn to this idea of scenes defined by locations, almost like

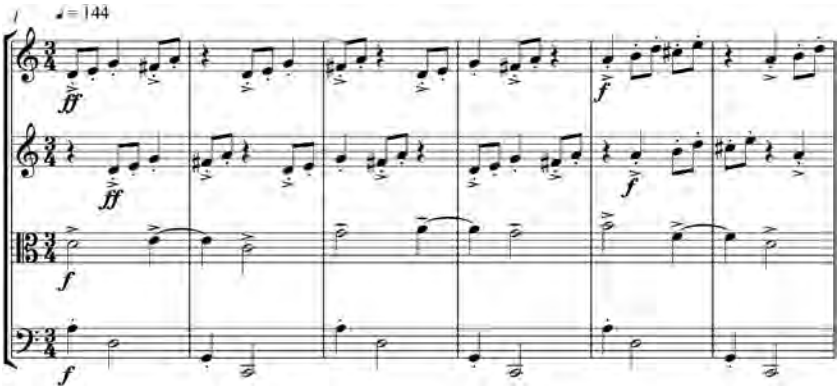

Figure 9.1 Example 1: type A music

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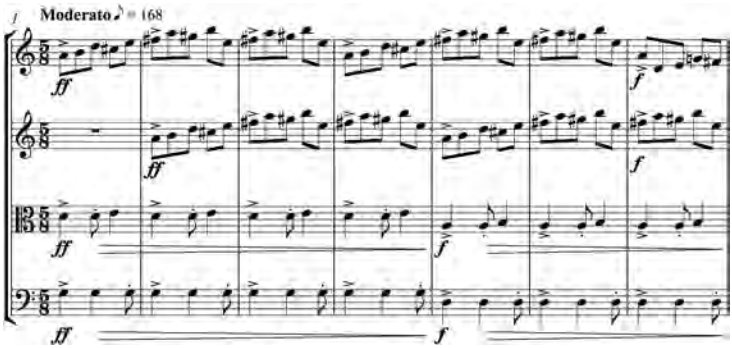

Figure 9.2 Example 1: type B music

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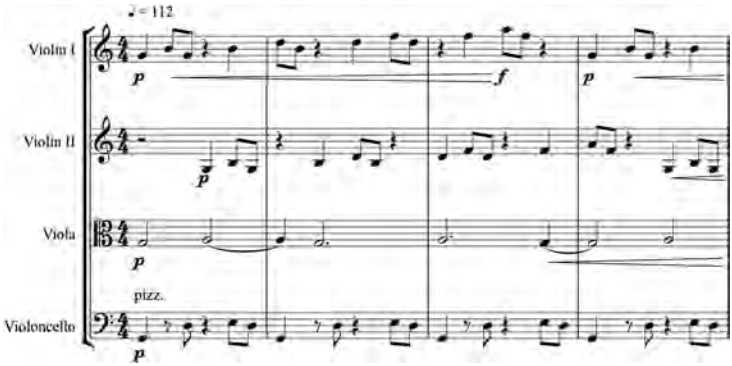

Figure 9.3 Example 1: type C music

Source: Printed with permission from the University of York Music Press.

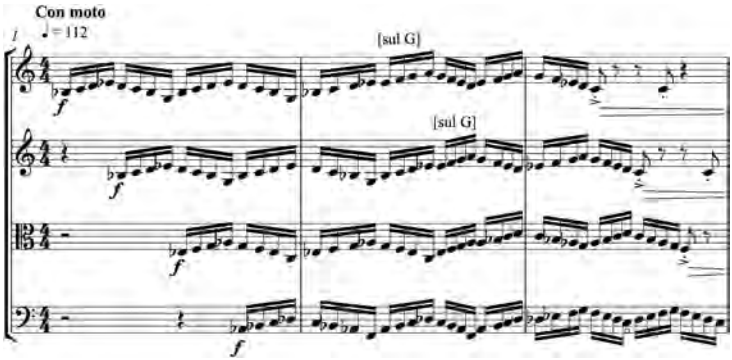

Figure 9.4 Example 1: type D music

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empty boxes, which would then be populated by action. Sometimes slow paced (as in the parents' steady and loving contemplation of their sleeping children), and sometimes very fast and very funny (as in the slapstick confrontation between the younger son and the local gang led by Taro, the boss's son). The idea suggested a detached approach to musical form: units of time populated by notes, in contrast to the tightly mimetic through-composed score method developed by Max Steiner and others, and descended from Wagnerian opera.

The main musical idea, heard over the credits in my scoring, returns at key points through the film, creating a tonal space matched to the routines and locations of the film's episodes (see Example 2 in Figure 9.5).

This material is very simple – the tune outlines just three notes, F sharp, E, and A; the harmonies are very open and transparent at the start because they are underpinned by the cello D, strongly suggesting D major. What I like about these three notes is that they can also be heard as part of a very different scale, C sharp minor. And there is throughout the score a tension between these two tonal areas, which becomes more pronounced with the darkening tenor of the scenes as the drama unfolds. This is evident at the start of the second part of the film, where the title music reprises with C sharp as its tonal centre (see Example 3 in Figure 9.6).

The third important tonal centre in the score is B minor. I employ an open fifth (B and F sharp) as a clear motif. Sinuous lines weave chromatically through this interval with suggestions of minor/major modalities (musicians know that B is the relative minor of D major in key terms, so this relationship is well established in music theory terms). Unlike the dynamic tonality of much classical music, tonal centres here serve as markers for areas, or scenes,

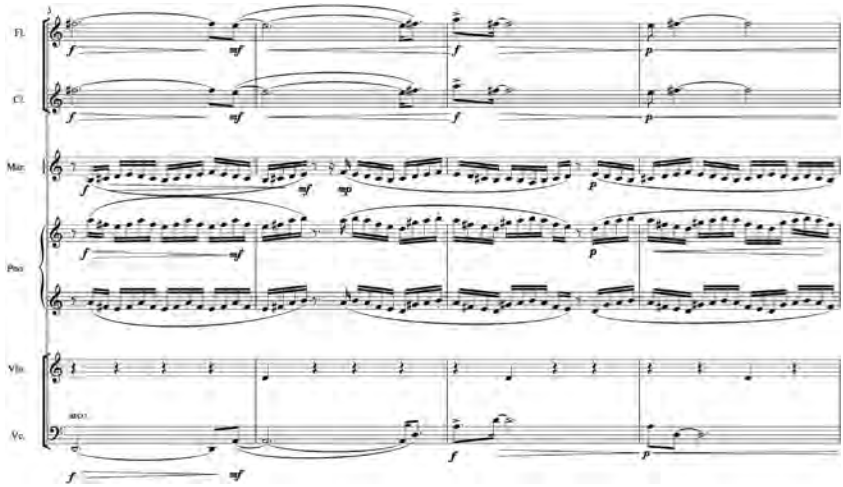

Figure 9.5 Example 2: bars 5 to 8 of Ed Hughes 2010 score to *I Was Born, But . . .*

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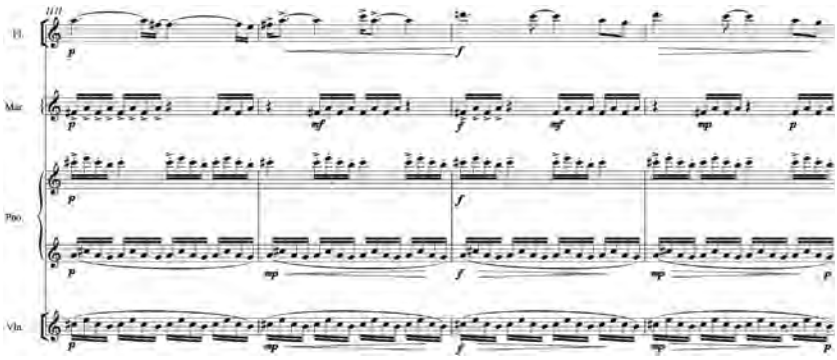

Figure 9.6 Example 3: bars 1,111 to 1,115 of Ed Hughes 2010 score to *I Was Born, But . . .*

Source: Printed with permission from the University of York Music Press.

that exist in clearly contrasted colours, such as the cinematic language in *I Was Born, But . . .* The score associates the tonal centre of B minor with a particular location, the interior of the Yoshii household, to which Ozu returns as the stories unfold. The first time we hear the music, it is as the Yoshii family are unpacking in their new home (see Example 4 in Figure 9.7). The final time we hear a version of this music is the morning after Yoshii has chastised his sons in the film's scene of greatest explicit conflict – a scene that is both amusing and disturbing as passions are briefly out of control. These two different versions of the same music frame the unfolding of two simultaneous storylines concerned with power and conflict, which create a symmetry between the worlds of the adults and the children; these two worlds collide in a late scene when Yoshii and his two sons briefly clash, before resolving in closing scenes of philosophical resignation and humour.

So, the music follows the film. Yet the musical materials also reflect psychological developments. For me, this is an instance of my personal musical language attaining the Ozu-esque – the music unfolds in a way that is analogous to the gradual disclosure of the human characters' dilemmas and conflicts within the impassive environment and surroundings of Ozu's cinema. This mixed aesthetic recalls *certain* aspects of the work of the great Eastern-influenced twentieth-century American composer John Cage.[10] The effect is different from the through-composed teleologies of much film music, influenced by Western narrative symphonic and operatic practices.

Having stressed Ozu's disciplined use of locations and pillow shots, and how these might influence an Ozu-esque approach in musical composition, Ozu's capture of human interplay and interaction is deft and exquisite. Some of the most striking scenes in the silent films concern a playful and almost choreographic construction of group dynamics. In *I Was Born, But . . .* the first set-to between the Yoshiis' son and the local gang is constructed with

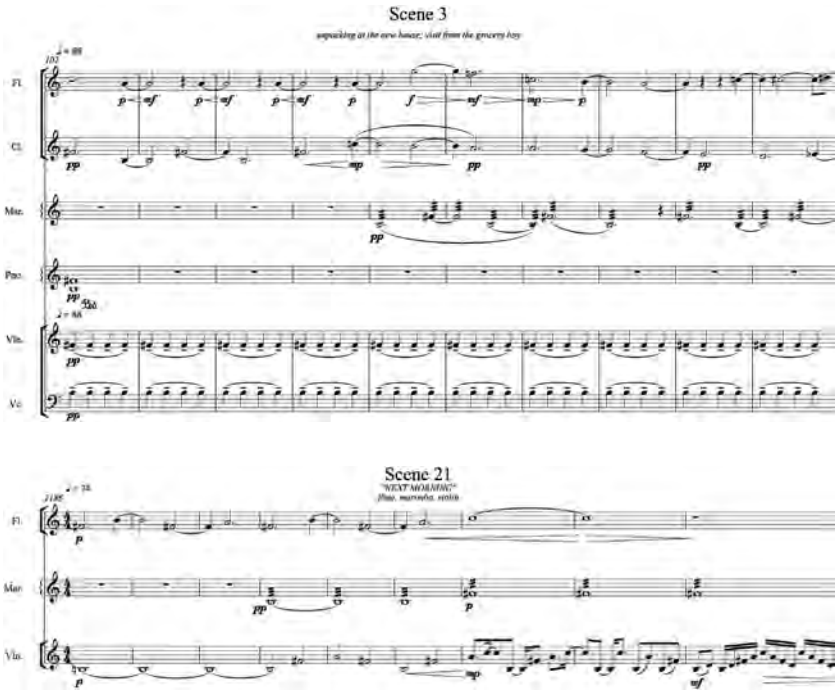

Figure 9.7 Example 4: two contrasting but related musical scenes

Source: Printed with permission from the University of York Music Press.

the visual precision of a western. *Walk Cheerfully* (1930) is a gangster picture and, as Pamela Hutchinson notes, 'ostensibly set in Tokyo, but truly resident in an imagined trans-Pacific replica of the city';[11] and yet emergent in that setting is a characteristically domestic melodrama concerned with the impact of Westernisation on traditional family life. Between these two zones of genre tribute and, arguably, truly Ozu-esque concerns, there are moments for contemplation of space and human interplay. In one such moment, five gangsters sit in a line looking bored and await the next move in a snooker game. Cross-legged, they rock their feet up and down, and smoke. As the gangster from another gang takes his shot, the camera focuses on the line of trousered legs that are suddenly stilled. When he misses his shot, the five rise and collectively mark the moment with a stylised and highly rehearsed gesture. In this brief moment, details are captured through meticulous editing and composition. Ozu's interest in male group choreography of this kind also comes through frequently in the student genre films. The function of my music at this point is similarly balanced between marking a narrative point and quite simply enjoying the visual spectacle, and registering it rhythmically.

The tempo of the music approximately matches the rising and falling of the gangsters' fidgeting legs; the time signature of the music (five beats per bar) corresponds to the number of men in their visually synchronised group. The music matches the beats and accents of the picture sometimes, but not always. The overall effect of these partial alignments is twofold: the music becomes complicit with the scene while maintaining an independent counterpoint suitable to the perpetuation of continuity; the music registers and *acquires* Ozu-esque concerns with visual balance, form, and rhythm.

In *Woman of Tokyo* (1933), Ozu, as Anthony Nield comments, bid 'a firm farewell to the student comedies' and the gangster genre to create a 45-minute film that is notable for its serious highlighting of social issues, including the struggle for money and education in the Depression era.[12] Ozu's characteristic film style grows strongly in this film. The structural pattern of intervening 'pillow shots' that mark the passing of time and the move from one location to another acquires greater prominence. Such shots include cutaways to a steaming kettle, to a pair of socks on a stand, or to longer distance views such as factory chimneys; they have a tendency to frame and temper the effect of the melodrama, which concerns Chikako's (Yoshiko Okada) devotion to her brother Ryoichi (Ureo Egawa), a student. To fund his education and lifestyle, Chikako lives a double life: by day, a full-time typist; by night, a hostess in a seedy cabaret.

Noël Burch argues that the unmotivated absence of people from such shots produces a 'de-centering effect' in the film, away from human concerns and environment.[13] This quality interested me in creating a score to this film. To accompany the title sequence, I developed musical material using a solo cello multitracked around the note E. This establishes a pitch centre that acts as a point of return – a musical centre that is associated with, although not entirely assimilated by, the human drama and the fall of Chikako. In contrast to this, I developed non-pitched percussive musical material as a kind of lightly pattering, decentred adjunct to scenes in which humans are present in equal measure to the objects that surround them. Moments of particular emotional significance, and human-centredness, are marked by a brief *silence*: for example, in Chikako's glance of affection towards her brother, unseen by him, before she hands over money for his fees and entertainment (3′08″). A spatial cut from the street light outside the cabaret to the light inside the brother and sister's home (23′38″) is also marked by silence. In a critical scene (*c*.17′40″) between Ryoichi and his girlfriend Harue (Kinuyo Tanaka), the question of Chikako's character is raised – would Ryoichi still love his sister if it turned out that she 'wasn't who you think she is'? This leads to a sequence in which the multitracked cello material returns and forms a bridge to the cabaret, where Chikako is about to telephone to lie about why she is late returning home. In the ensuing confrontation, bitter and violent exchanges are matched by a percussive beat that (*c*.24′50″) cuts through, and, in a sense, does violence to, the continuity of the surrounding musical textures.

This tendency (disruption of one kind of musical material by another) reaches its climax in the tense final scenes, when the nature of the tragedy becomes clear. Chikako arrives to ask Harue if she knows where Ryoichi is (*c*.34′12″). Their exchange – a duet of concern – is mapped by the chattering marimba and the low dark tones of the cello. Ozu evokes the deepening concern through the characters' duet via a rhythmical repetition revealing darkening fate; this visual repetition is echoed in the musical material. An exchange of glances and a silence supervene (*c*.35′35″), acknowledging a new stage of gravity in the narrative. Then, cello pizzicato chords accompany Harue's and Chikako's regret as they sit together, waiting for news (the film is built with typical economy around a series of dialogues; these exchanges are matched with pared down instrumentation of cello and percussion). This musical moment forms a non-mimetic musical accompaniment: this particular chord sequence is similar to one underpinning a lament in my opera, *The Birds* (2005). In the opera, the cello chords accompany a short aria (song) on the subject of abandonment. Here, the cello chords are alone and there is no audible song, but the sung lament might be understood as immanent in the visuals, grounded by the accompanying cello chords.

A boy arrives. Harue is wanted on the telephone in the nearby clockmakers. It is bad news for Chikako. The camera pauses on Chikako, and then cuts to the shop. As the camera surveys the shop, a sound effect of clocks comes to the foreground in the soundtrack, decentring but not effacing the cello chords (so Chikako stays as a waiting presence). As Harue speaks to her brother, the clock sounds take over from the music. When the music returns (*c*.37′30″), it is with a long, low single tone (a cello C sharp, a minor third lower than the principle theme) followed by a succession of percussive beats marking the final revelation and recalling the earlier brief explicit outbreak of violence by Ryoichi against his sister. As Harue gives Chikako the news, the principle theme returns, restoring the pitch centre to E, and marking the final stage in this compelling and cyclically fatalistic drama.

The film *A Mother Should Be Loved* (1934) is one of several Ozu films that are preserved but incomplete, due to the loss of one or more reels of film. This is a poignant story of two sons' relationships with their mother, following their father's unexpected death. The fact that early scenes with the father in happier times are the missing reels is a loss but also strangely appropriate. It reminds one of Ozu's tendency to skip events in order to focus on human moments and relationships. This editing technique (skipping events and therefore disrupting the illusion of continuity) is sometimes called ellipsis, and is an amplification of the pillow shot and another characteristic trait in Ozu's distinctive continuity principles. For example, early in the film, the father's funeral is completely omitted. Instead, the focus is entirely on what the two boys will really remember from that moment – the intervention of their uncle in their lives following the funeral.

In my musical response to this film, I chose to work more experimentally than hitherto. As in *I Was Born But . . .*, I used harmony to express internal

conflict and tension (the main idea is E, G, B, and C, which contains both C major and E minor triads); also as before, I used the darker timbre of the clarinet to mediate the high sounds of the flute and the low sounds of the cello in order to achieve a score that becomes gradually darker and more nuanced. However, in a new departure, I added synth sounds to the central resource of an acoustic ensemble. The novel sound of the synth became associated with arrested time, and marks psychological emphases in the narrative. For example, when the boys are ordered to leave school and go home (because their father has suddenly died), they collect their coats from the corridor; on the way out, they encounter the school caretaker, who asks, 'Was your father alright this morning?' This occurs at *c.*3′45″ in the present version of the film. Here, the synth chimes in, arresting the flow of musical time, in accordance with the arresting of psychological time. The two boys run off. Ozu then cuts to a medium shot and a close-up of the family's clock, followed by the exterior of the boys' home. The next scene takes place in the house, with the boys seated at the dining table. Confirmation of their father's death and associated events are entirely left out. Yet through this ellipsis, Ozu makes loss and absence palpable, casting a shadow over the rest of the film. At the same time, there is continuity either side of the temporal cut (life goes on). My music continues either side of the ellipsis too, but the break itself is registered in the distinctive tonal colour of the synth: a characteristic sound that connects with similar moments of temporal discontinuity, and emotional accents, elsewhere in the film.

The scoring project overall was determined by the BFI's DVD release schedule. This meant writing through Ozu's silent films thematically (the student comedies, the gangster films, the melodramas, etc.) – which, as it happens, corresponded to a rough chronological timetable in terms of Ozu's original output – although such was the intensity of production that there were certainly thematic overlaps. Writers observe that the screwball student comedies were very popular and displayed clear references to American films – but these references are evident too in the more developed comedy drama of 1932, *I Was Born, But . . .*, and also in the gangster films. Of course, Ozu was responding pragmatically to his studio's directives and to the tastes of his audiences, but there is also a compelling sense that Ozu's voice in this phase of his career is composed of Western facets made Japanese, and that this appropriation remained a vital part of his directorial voice. This element was gradually subdued going forward as the films became more sophisticated. For while a critique of Japanese families and workers' rush to Westernise may be read in the films of this period, there is also a positive delight in appropriation.

At the same time, permanent features of Ozu's visual language make it coherent and individual. Some are initially understated. Underlying principles and elements in the silent period gradually move from latent/background (e.g. organisation of locations in *A Straightforward Boy*) to more explicit expression (e.g. cyclical form in *I Was Born, But . . .*, use of discontinuous

ellipses in *A Mother Should Be Loved*, and pillow shots in *Woman of Tokyo*). I have shown how I responded to these distinctive features. The essence of this is that writing music for these films stimulated sympathetic yet non-mimetic musical counterpoint to the visuals, positioned like chords accompanying melody in an opera, where the melody is not needed because it is immanent in the visuals. My treatment of musical time was sometimes non-linear and sometimes disrupted by occasional on-screen violence, either psychological or physical, or by the omission of key events. This might sound like a mapping on to twentieth-century modernist principles, but the transparency, elegance, poise, and gentle pacing of these films is very far from expressionism, constructivism, or stream of consciousness. There is something appealingly contemporary and direct in Ozu's outlook, which is far removed from Western self-conscious modernist experimentation of that period. Being consciously Ozu-esque therefore may legitimise some creative mixing up of cultural interests, which would hardly have bothered Ozu (given the style of scores commissioned for his later sound films). But, in turn, it also involves asking how one's Western musical language and preoccupations (e.g. ideas around harmony and teleology) may be affected and influenced by Ozu's visual style.

Notes

1 See www.shochiku.com/ (accessed 23 December 2016).
2 For a description of this work, see Ed Hughes, 'Silent Film, Live Music and Contemporary Composition', in *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films*, ed. Kevin J. Donnelly and Ann-Kristin Wallengren (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
3 In Western music theory, a simple musical structure in which the opening music recurs after a passage featuring contrasting material.
4 Donald Richie, *Ozu* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 162.
5 'In the larger theaters a fanfare would sound before every show – from the simple flute and drum of the earliest film showings a full Western-style orchestra with *samisen* had evolved.' Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 24.
6 Darrell William Davis, 'Reigniting Japanese Tradition with *Hana-Bi*', *Cinema Journal* 40, no. 4 (2001): 64. This review article discusses 'essentialism' in Burch and Bordwell while acknowledging they put Japanese cinema 'securely on the film studies map'.
7 'The particularity of these shots is that *they suspend the diegetic flow*, using a considerable range of strategies and producing a variety of complex relationships. With some hesitation, I will call these images *pillow-shots*, proposing a loose analogy with the "pillow-word" of classical Japanese poetry.' Noël Burch, *To the Distant Observer* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1979), 160.
8 All musical examples © University of York Music Press and reproduced by kind permission.
9 David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 226.
10 Meaning Cage's early works using rhythmic structures, which were influenced by non-Western philosophy and musical techniques.

11 Pamela Hutchinson, 'Walk Cheerfully'. Liner notes for The Gangster Films. DVD. Directed by Yasujiro Ozu (London: BFI, 2013), 9–11.
12 Anthony Nield, 'Woman of Tokyo'. Liner notes for *Three Melodramas*. DVD. Directed by Yasujiro Ozu (London: BFI, 2012), 5–7.
13 Burch, *Distant Observer*, 161.

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Chapter 10

Rediscovering a Film, Revisiting a Film, Damaging a Film

A Musical Comparison of Three DVD Editions of *Nosferatu*

Emilio Audissino

> There was once a film called *Nosferatu*, which rightly called itself a 'symphony of horror'. Shivery anxiety and nightmares, shadowy forms and premonitions of death, madness and ghosts were all woven into the images of gloomy mountainous landscapes and stormy seas.
>
> Béla Balázs[1]

Friedrich W. Murnau's *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922) was the first screen transposition of *Dracula* (1897) and made that horror story resonate with the sociopolitical context of the time. In the aftermath of the First World War, a beaten Germany had to recover from the material and moral devastations of the war and the humiliation of defeat, facing a massive economical crisis and political instability, always on the verge of some radical upheaval. The context of the Weimar Republic produced the German expressionist movement, characterised by tales of madness, de-personification, death, and horror, typically rendered in a distorted and harshly angular visual style and high-contrast cinematography dominated by ominous shadows. As in the expressionist paintings, the inner anguish and insanity of the characters were projected externally and made visible: 'The phenomena on the screen are the phenomena of the soul.'[2] The prototypical expressionist film is *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920). *Nosferatu* does not share such extreme visual stylisation, yet madness and horror are central themes. Compared to the subsequent screen versions of *Dracula*, Max Schreck's vampire is not as handsome and magnetic as Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee, but feral and repugnant: '[His] gaunt frame and beady eyes accentuate an almost alien visage with pointed ears, bald head, sharp nose and chin, and two little fangs set close together.'[3] Also, his name is not Dracula, but Orlok, for copyright reasons.[4] An extremely influential film, *Nosferatu* – like the vampire's disease – has spread throughout film history, with copious quotations, remakes, and revisitations.[5]

Suppose you have decided to purchase a DVD/Blu-ray and watch the film I have just described. Accomplishing that is not as straightforward as one might think. Unbeknownst to you, you might end up watching *another* film.

The silent cinema repertoire is not as stable as the sound cinema repertoire: only about 20 per cent of the films produced during the silent era are still with us, and some of them have gaps and missing parts. The identification of the 'original' version of a film is an intricate enterprise. The most extreme case is *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927): for 70 years, a 90-minute edition was in circulation; then a 120-minute reconstruction closer to the 'original' was commercially released in 2002; and only in 2010, after a fortunate discovery, the 1927 – 150-minute – version that had been previously thought to be irremediably lost became available.[6]

Music is a particularly sore point in the DVD editions of silent films. Even if we happen to have a complete or almost complete print, music is likely to be different from one edition to the other, because in silent cinema music and sounds in general were provided live, and hence were subject to change from one screening to another. Unlike sound films, in the silent era, music was not recorded and fixed on the filmstrip, and hence it was unstable and volatile. When preparing an edition of a silent film, musical accompaniment has to be chosen and coupled with the images. The choice has a significant impact on how the film will be experienced by viewers, as music is capable of transforming our perception of the visuals powerfully. In the following pages, three DVD editions of *Nosferatu* are compared, each featuring a different musical accompaniment.[7] The first one is edited to be as adherent as possible to the 'original', including a reconstructed musical score; the second one is a revisitation that couples a good-quality copy that is visually close to the original with a newly composed contemporary score; the third one (deliberately chosen to represent the opposite side of the spectrum) is a low-cost DVD edition that shows little concern for the film's original aesthetic and narrative design.

The 2006 F.W. Murnau-Stiftung Version

In 2005–2006, the film historian Luciano Berriatúa reconstructed a version of *Nosferatu* that was as similar as possible to the one premiered in 1922.[8] The film was restored in a good approximation of its original length (*c*.93 minutes) and its original look (the tinting of the scenes and the typeface of the intertitles). In common with a number of silent films, *Nosferatu* was tinted, i.e. a uniform layer of colour that responded to narrative or emotional requirements of the scene/sequence was applied to segments of the filmstrip. For example, natural landscapes would be tinted in green and fire scenes in violent red for more dramatic effect. For most of its history, *Nosferatu* has circulated in monochrome copies, but in this film tinting is not just a decorative surplus. There is a fundamental separation between day/sunlight (when the vampire is powerless) and night/darkness (when it rises from the grave), and tinting had a central role in articulating this alternation. At that time, film stock was not as light-sensitive as it would become in later decades, and exterior night scenes had to be filmed during the day in full sunlight, often

making it difficult in a monochrome print to discern whether a scene was meant to be set in daytime or night-time. Since the difference is important in *Nosferatu*, the transition from day to night was not only signalled by descriptive intertitles and recurrent details of sunrise/sunset, but also through tinting. Daylight and candlelight interiors were rendered with amber, twilight shots with pink, and night shots with light blue. A monochrome version of the film thus robs the viewer of an important chromatic dialectic, and also might appear confusing as to what moment of the day a scene is set. *Nosferatu* boasted a score tailored to the film's specificities, with a decidedly more integral narrative and formal role for the music compared to productions from the earlier periods, with their eclectic musical accompaniments. The Berriatúa version features the film's original music, composed by Hans Erdmann, in a reconstruction by Berndt Heller. As the film *Nosferatu* suffered a series of mishaps right after its premiere – the production company went bankrupt and, because of copyright infringement, all the copies were ordered to be destroyed[9] – so did the music. While the film managed to survive to the present day, its music did not. Erdmann's score and the film's cue sheets were lost. The reconstruction was possible because parts of the Erdmann score (40 minutes out of about 90 total) survived in the form of a two-part suite, 'Fantastisch-Romantische Suite' (published by the Berlin firm Bote & Bock in 1926), arranged by Erdmann himself and Giuseppe Becce. While the 'Fantastisch-Romantische Suite' has helped preserve the thematic bulk of Erdmann's score from oblivion, some guesswork was needed in the reconstruction of the entirety of the work. A previous major reconstruction of the full Erdmann score was made by Gillian Anderson and James Kessler.[10] In the absence of cue sheets, the Anderson/Kessler reconstruction was guided by the sparse descriptions of the music in 1922 reviews of the film, and the materials from the 'Fantastisch-Romantische Suite' were integrated with pieces from the *Allgemeines Handbuch der Filmmusik* – a film accompaniment manual and musical anthology edited by Erdmann with Giuseppe Becce and Ludwig Brav – and with minor interpolations written by Kessler in the Erdmann style.[11]

The Heller reconstruction for the DVD edition we are examining is similarly based on the 'Fantastisch-Romantische Suite', but he integrated the lacunal score by following the fashion of earlier photoplay accompaniment: music was partly original, expressly written for the film, and partly still adhering to 'compilation score' practice, i.e. selections from the repertoire of concert and opera music were collated and arranged to fit the film (as in Joseph Carl Breil's score for *The Birth of a Nation* [Griffith, 1915]). We know from the 1922 reviews that *Nosferatu* was introduced not by an original overture by Erdmann, but with the overture to Heinrich Marschner's opera *Der Vampyr* (1828). Heller's interpolations from the repertoire include Bizet ('Galop' from *Petite suite pour orchestre*), Verdi/Tavan ('Grand Fantasie' from *Un ballo in maschera*), Giuseppe Becce ('De Profundis Suite', 'Misterioso Fantastico', and excerpts written for the film accompaniment anthology *Kinobibliothek*), and

Arrigo Boito's *Mefistofele* ('Prelude to Act 3'). The overall impression of the Heller/Erdmann score is one of narrative nuance and sensitivity, and musical richness and sophistication. At the time of the premiere, Erdmann's music was judged 'highbrow'[12] and requiring an orchestra 'ready to present Beethoven or Richard Strauss'.[13] In their discussion of Erdmann's music, Janina Müller and Tobias Plebuch note how the 'Fantastisch-Romantische Suite' was assembled in modular form – 'a set of scores that were carefully designed for flexible arrangements'.[14] This modularity was an improvement on the rough cut-and-paste compilations that combined excerpts from the classical repertoire with little care for the musical flow and coherence. But Erdmann's music was innovative not only in terms of its macrostructural 'modular' approach, but also in terms of internal design – characterised by 'sequential variation', 'development', and 'change, contrast or diversity'[15] – and in terms of idiom:

> Consider an early photoplay composition by John Stepan Zamecnik from 1913. His 'Storm Scene' [. . .] sounds like bad music and, in fact, it is bad music according to almost any standard. [. . .] By comparison, Hans Erdmann's original score [. . .] brought forth a more complex instance of photoplay music. [. . .] Compared to Zamecnik's 'Storm Scene', the movements of Erdmann's *Suite*, even though they retain the segmented structure, have greater variety, development, and coherence.[16]

Serene consonant music, ranging from a pastoral mood for exterior natural settings to the sentimental music for the Hutter/Ellen romance, is contrasted with the dissonant expressionistic music depicting Count Orlok and his devilish deeds and creepy locales. Much of the traditional weaponry of suspense/thriller music is aptly employed: anxious tremolo strings, ominous bass pedal-tones, creepy up/down chromatic scales, startling brass stingers, stalking timpani beats, and direful tam-tam rolls. Let's now examine how the Heller reconstructed score works in the *Murnau-Stiftung* DVD edition.[17]

The film opens with menacing music that, from the titles, continues over the images of a diary detailing the dreadful events, and the infernal nature of the forces involved, that would corrupt Goodness, symbolised by the love between Hutter (Gustav von Wangenheim) and Ellen (Greta Schröder), with Evil. Symmetrically, the film closes with uplifting music as the selfless sacrifice of Ellen defeats the vampire and restores the order of Goodness. Within this overarching structure, a set of recurring musical motifs, gestures, and timbres endow the score (and the film) with further cohesion. For example, a three-note rising motif by the muted trumpets is associated with the vampire and, very appropriately, the motif ends with a tritone (the augmented fourth interval that in medieval treatises was prohibited and called 'diabolus in musica') and it also suggests, with its rising figure, the vampire itself rising from the grave. In the *Murnau-Stiftung* edition, it appears for the first time when Hutter mentions his imminent visit to Orlok to the landlord

of the Carpathian guest house. Everybody in the dining room freezes in fear and, over a suspenseful high-register pedal tone of the violins, we hear the three ominous notes. Later, in his bedroom, Hutter glances over a book about the bloodsuckers, and the three-note motif is stated again, reinforcing the connection between Orlok and vampires. The vampire motif is then reprised when we see a shot of the sunset introducing the second night at Orlok's castle – it is the night in which Hutter discovers his host's horrific nature. We hear the vampire motif again when we read in the diary that 'Nosferatu was already spreading his wings'. And again, when Hutter is seated on the floor of his bedroom, horrified after finding the count sleeping in a coffin, the music signals Hutter's final realisation that Orlok is a vampire. The three-note motif has associated Orlok with the vampire from the beginning and has consistently accompanied Hutter in his process of gradual discovery of this truth.

Count Orlok himself is also musically represented by blasts of muted trumpets and by the xylophone, whose dry timbre has been associated with death since its use in Camille Saint-Saëns's 'Dance Macabre' (1874), in which the xylophone sounds like the bones of the dancing skeletons clanking together.[18] While the vampire motif is more generally associated with vampirism, xylophone and muted trumpets – death and horror – are specifically associated with Orlok. We hear the xylophone for the first time when Hutter settles in his bedroom in the guest house, ready to meet with the Count – death is around, the music seems to be suggesting – while muted trumpets are heard when the mysterious carriage approaches Hutter to take him to the castle. We hear the xylophone when Orlok disturbingly tries to suck the blood from Hutter's injured finger, and we hear it again the next morning when Hutter discovers some bite marks on his neck – the xylophone associates the two events, and thus redundantly stresses the cause of those bite marks. The combination of muted trumpets and xylophone is featured when Orlok fully unleashes his malevolent nature: during his nightly visit to Hutter's bedroom and when we see him walk on the masts of the Empusa ship to exterminate the last survivors of the crew.

The *Murnau-Stiftung* edition also provides some slightly comic moments. Unlike the Anderson/Kessler reconstruction, the Heller reconstruction does not score the first meeting with Orlok using outright horror music, but more neutral music, in line with the perplexed stares that Hutter gives to his strange-looking host, who brusquely 'welcomes' him with a complaint: 'You have kept me waiting too long!' During the dinner, the mood of the pizzicato music is halfway between mystery and almost comical awkwardness. Hutter feels intimidated and uncomfortable before his peculiar host and examines him with concern. Hutter also seems to be worried about the outcome of the negotiation with Orlok, who looks like an eccentric and particularly ugly-looking type, rather than a menace.[19] In the context of this musical accompaniment, the sudden tinging of the skeleton clock looks, almost

humorously, more like another macabre eccentricity of the Count, rather than something ominous.

The tinging of the skeleton clock brings us to another point of interest of the *Murnau-Stiftung* edition, and one that is typical of the silent era: the onomatopoeic function of the music. In a cinema in which not only dialogue but also sound effects were absent, attempts at live synchronisation of both were not uncommon, and music was often in charge of providing the missing sound to particularly salient details. A typical example, inherited from the vaudeville theatre, was to accentuate farcical pratfalls with a clash of cymbals or a drum hit. Here, the triangle in the orchestra playing in synchronisation with the clock chiming provides the missing and dramatically relevant sound. Similarly, later in the film, when the herald announces the new orders to contain the spread of the plague, a roll of the snare drum in the orchestra is synchronised with the drum played in the film.[20] In the finale, this silent cinema onomatopoeic function of the music coexists with a subtler and more modern narrative function. It is clear that Ellen is the pure maiden, mentioned in the vampire book, whose sacrifice can kill the vampire. She has to invite him in and keep him with her until sunrise. When we see Orlok getting closer and closer to Ellen, we hear a resolute four-note motif for muted trumpets, building up in a series of ascending and more urgent progressions, until the shadow of Orlok's hand clutches Ellen's heart, punctuated by a tragic hit of the tam-tam. But the rooster crows, signalling the sunrise, and thus the imminent demise of Orlok, who, distracted by Ellen, has not gone safely back to his daytime hideout. Interestingly, the sound of the rooster crowing is provided by clarinets, which not only play onomatopoeically, but do so by restating the same four-note motif that we previously heard when Orlok was attacking Ellen. That same motif that first, played by menacing muted trumpets, seemed to signal Orlok's victory over Ellen now signals that it was not a victory, but a defeat, because Orlok fell into Ellen's trap.

The Heller reconstruction for the *Murnau-Stiftung* edition effectively and sensibly employs and expands the surviving Erdmann musical materials not only according to the conventions of photoplay accompaniment, but also respecting the detailed musico-visual dramaturgy that can be surmised from the rich thematicism of Erdmann's music. If the reconstruction could not resurrect the original score itself, it re-enacted its spirit through a deft elaboration and synchronisation of the surviving materials.

The 1997 Channel 4 Presentation

For the English edition of the new restoration by the München Filmmuseum and the Cineteca del Comune di Bologna, Erdmann's original score was replaced with a new one by the 'vampire expert' James Bernard.[21] Bernard made his name with his work on the Hammer horror films, in particular for the Dracula series starring Christopher Lee – notable titles include *Horror of*

Dracula (Terence Fisher, 1958), *Dracula Prince of Darkness* (Terence Fisher, 1966) *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (Freddy Francis, 1968), and other Hammer non-Dracula horrors such as *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957), *The Gorgon* (Terence Fisher, 1964), and *The Devil Rides Out* (Terence Fisher, 1968), to name a few.[22] With such a consolidated experience in the horror genre, Bernard came well equipped to revisit the old film through a contemporary 'symphony of horror', and infused into the score those stylistic traits that had defined his Hammer works: basically, a late romantic symphonism alternating thunderous orchestral blasts and snarling dissonances for the horrific moments and the villains, and tender sentimental music for the romance interludes and the positive heroes. The score is not half-original/half-repertoire, but entirely written specifically for the film, like a modern film score. Some of the silent cinema onomatopoeic function is kept – we hear the tings of the skeleton clock and the snare drum rolls of the herald – but in this case they can be more confidently classified as sound effects added on top of the music, because the tinging is not produced by an orchestral triangle and there is no trace of tinging in the track 'In the Castle' on the CD release of the score.[23] Compared to Erdmann's, the overall score sounds more similar to contemporary film music, especially the 'action music' during Hutter's escape and the attempted lynching of Knock. And Hammer Film fans will recognise the familiar world of Bernard's Dracula music: thunderous dissonant chords for muted brass and emphatic trills of the woodwinds and strings. To further mark the kinship with Bernard's previous works, the four-note Nosferatu theme replicates the prosody of the name itself – Nos-fe-ra-tu – as did the three-note 'Dracula Theme' – Drac-u-la. The thematic unity and development of the score is greater than in the Erdmann/Heller reconstructed score: 'Murnau titled the film "A Symphony of Horrors", so I have tried to write a score that holds together like a symphony – or more aptly, a symphonic poem – a web of several contrasting themes.'[24] The three main themes in the score are Hutter's (a buoyant theme in major, reminiscent of a rustic dance), Ellen's (a passionate cantabile for strings), and the Orlok/Nosferatu motto (played by brass), plus a handful of minor motifs. For example, a sinister slithering motif is first presented when Knock, Nosferatu's minion, is introduced, a motif that is subsequently associated with the deviously underhand spread of evil, while the forceful Nosferatu motto is associated with the vampire's blatant horrific deeds.

The gaiety of Hutter's theme gives way to a worried minor mode rendition when he settles in his room in the guest house – the landlord has just warned him of the werewolves; the theme is again presented in minor mode during the dinner scene at Orlok's castle. It is again in minor mode when Hutter wakes up after his first night – and bites – at the castle. Quite effectively, as Hutter naively dispels his fears as mere nightmares, his theme reverts to the original major mode and cheerful mood, which continues during the beginning of the scene in which he writes a letter to Ellen. Hutter's theme

is replaced by Ellen's as he writes to her, but when he humorously mentions about being plagued by mosquitoes, the music – unlike Erdmann's score – does not play along with Hutter's naivety, but drastically states Nosferatu's motto, as to clarify that this is no laughing matter. Indeed, from now on, Hutter's carefree theme ceases to exist. The rest of the score is built upon the contrast between the Nosferatu motto and Ellen's theme, a struggle between the forces of Evil and of Good.

Dreamy versions of the Nosferatu motto – for violins and high-register woodwinds – can be heard when Ellen sleepwalks: the vampire is trying to subjugate her. A dramatic and action-oriented version of Ellen's theme can be heard when Hutter escapes from the castle. In the scene in which Ellen reads the vampire book and realises that she has to give her life to stop Nosferatu, we hear Ellen's theme with interpolated fragments of the Nosferatu motto: their two destinies are now inextricably united. Bernard's score stresses the importance of Ellen in defeating the vampire. Erdmann did not develop a proper Ellen theme throughout the film, and scored the rooster crowing with the same motif that previously seemed to signify the vampire's triumph over Ellen: music stressed Nosferatu's demise as a consequence of *his* miscalculation, his falling into Ellen's trap. Bernard chose to give Ellen more credit. It is *her* sacrifice that defeats Nosferatu: 'At the end, when the cock crows, Ellen's theme becomes more and more major and finally conquers that of Orlok, to become the theme of goodness. It does not reach its final cadence until she dies.'[25]

A 2003 Low-Cost Edition

As a last comparison, I examine one of the least satisfying editions in circulation of *Nosferatu*. Anyone picking up a less costly edition of a sound film will probably end up with a version of inferior quality, but it will be a good approximation of *the* film anyway. With the silent repertoire, the risk is to get an edition that has only a remote resemblance. Besides image quality and completeness, in low-cost editions music is often likely to be added as some sort of audio wallpaper, compiled with little or no concern for the narrative needs of the film. Low-cost editions can already be quite disappointing visually – scratched and faded high-contrast images – and poorly selected music may create further damage. The unaware buyer may think that *that* is *the* film, and thus judge the film itself as disappointing, while it is the poor version that makes it so. Such is the case with the 2003 Italian DVD release of *Nosferatu* that I have chosen.[26]

Besides music, there are at least two aspects that distance this edition from *the* film: black-and-white images and incorrect speed. The public domain MoMA print from which this edition was videotaped was of very poor quality, with a damaged and degraded image track, and it was mastered on DVD from a worn-out cassette, which means that the damages on the videotape add to those on the filmstrip (a striking magnetic dropout can be

spotted at 6′27″). More importantly, there is no tinting: the original colours that told which scenes were set at night and which at daytime are lost. Without the blue tint that marks a scene as a night setting, we experience a film telling us that the vampire cannot sustain sunlight, and yet we see the vampire comfortably roaming outdoors in daylight shots, which might be puzzling to those who are unaware of a precise colour code being missing here. The speed is wrong as, during videotaping, the film was apparently projected at 24 fps (sound speed) instead of the original 16–18 fps. Thus, the film is about 20 minutes shorter and all the characters move (comically) faster than they should.

Music exacerbates the incongruous tone. The chosen accompaniment is a Stravinsky compilation, built from 'Five Easy Pieces' (1917: Andante, Española, Balalaika, Napolitana, Galop), the 'Concerto for Two Solo Pianos' (1935: Con Moto, Notturno: Adagietto, Quattro Variazioni, Preludio e Fuga), and the march from 'Three Easy Pieces' (1917).[27] The musical selections are played one after the other at the beginning, and then presented recursively in the film – 'Five Easy Pieces' with some repetitions, then the 'Concerto for Two Solo Pianos' played two times, then the march from 'Three Easy Pieces', and then the adagio from 'Five Easy Pieces' again. The selections seem to be linked and reiterated without any true relation to what happens visually: when, in the Carpathians, Hutter reads the ominous revelations of the vampire book, we hear the carefree tarantella 'Napolitana'. Besides the barely comprehensible rationale for the music/visual coupling, the very assemblage of the music track betrays its being botched up: prolonged and pointless silences often follow the natural closure of a music piece that often does not correspond to a narrative or formal closure in the film, and thus music happens to be absent when it should be strongly required for dramatic purposes – for example, in the climax when Orlok clutches Ellen's heart.[28] Another issue is the music being played at breakneck tempo, to the point that recognising the Stravinsky pieces requires some effort. The result of this artificial speed-up is that, coupled with the too fast frame rate, the impression at times is that of watching some Keystone Cops comical antics. The most blatant instance is the scene in Knock's office. The Nosferatu-possessed estate agent reads Orlok's letter – covered in disturbingly esoteric marks – and then summons Hutter to send him to the 'land of ghosts' to negotiate the deal. He says, demonically, 'You could earn a little money. Of course the price is a little effort, some sweat . . . and perhaps a little blood.' In both Erdmann/Heller's and Bernard's version, the scene is scored with menacing music to stress the evident pact-with-the-devil quality of the action, or at least the trap in which the naive Hutter is about to fall. Here, the scene is accompanied by a ludicrously fast rendition of the 'Galop' that, combined with Knock's accelerated moves, makes the scene look like a farcical

pantomime, robbing it of all its gravitas. The same happens in the scene in which a horrified Hutter watches Orlok load a cart with all his unholy coffins, ready to depart to Wisborg to spread his plague. In the original, Orlok's operations were shot in fast motion – to give an unnatural quality to the vampire's moves. Here, with the action further accelerated by the wrong projection speed and accompanied by a too fast rendition of the 'Fuga' from the 'Concerto for Two Pianos', it looks as if Orlok were performing some amusing Méliès-like magical trick. If in these moments music adds unwanted comicality, in others it kills the drama by adding incongruously undramatic music. When Orlok appears in Hutter's room during the second night at the castle, one of the most frightening moments, the static and ethereal chords of the 'Preludio' make the arrival of the vampire look totally harmless. Stravinsky's 'Andante' is repeatedly used in the finale: when Ellen anxiously waits for Orlok; when he arrives and attacks her; and, closing the film, when Ellen dies. The repetition of this same (peaceful) piece flattens the dramatic arc of Ellen's sacrifice and death and washes all the pathos away. Erdmann/Heller's and Bernard's version both opened the film with minor mode threatening music and closed it with major mode uplifting music: Goodness has triumphed over Evil. Here, the 'Andante' opens the film and is uncritically reprised to close it: nothing has changed.

A final question might be raised: Why Stravinsky and why these pieces? I do not have a firm answer to this, and can only offer some speculations. Given the carelessness that is apparent in many technical and creative aspects of the construction of this compilation – from the lack of an overall discernible design and trajectory, to the artificially accelerated speed, to the audible presence of the static noises of the tape and the mechanical noises of the reading head of the cassette player – my view is that one album of Stravinsky's four-hand piano music was selected, containing all those pieces, and randomly attached to the film.[29] The choice of piano music might have been influenced by the fact that in the mind of the general public, a silent film is typically imagined being accompanied by a pianist. The choice of Stravinsky might be the result of some effort to find piano music with a higher ratio of dissonance than ragtime or the piano music of the romantic period, the staples of the early photoplay accompaniment music – *Nosferatu* is a horror film after all. And I cannot help thinking about a line in *The Seven Year Itch* (Billy Wilder, 1955): in a scene, the protagonist is selecting some music to set the tone for a seduction attempt on 'The Girl' who lives upstairs; the first record he comes across is one by Stravinsky, but he puts it away, saying, 'Stravinsky'd only scare her.' Stravinsky seems to have a reputation for being particularly modernistic, dissonant, and thus . . . scary? If Stravinsky might have been indeed an interesting choice for a repertoire accompaniment to *Nosferatu*, the selection and combination of his pieces made here is nevertheless not supportive of the mood and the storytelling.

Conclusions

What this comparison of three musical editions of *Nosferatu* can teach us is that great care needs to be taken in the choice of one DVD or Blu-ray edition of a silent film over another. Music in films matters: it guides us and influences how the images and the narrative are perceived and interpreted. Poor musical choices can make a good film look bad. With silent films, we can try to reconstruct the original music (if any prescribed music did exist); we can rewrite a new score in the spirit of the film; we can even add and reinterpret the film against the grain, by adding music in a style and mood completely distant from the original. In the case of *Nosferatu*, this has been done by Art Zoyd (progressive rock) and Danilo Rea (contemporary jazz), to cite two, and the results are interesting and legitimate operations of revival/revisitation of a classic. But just randomly dumping music on a silent film to fill the silence is a travesty. It would be better to watch the film without any sound altogether.

Notes

1 Béla Balázs, '*The Visible Man* [1924]', in *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory*, ed. Erica Carter, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Berghahn, 2011), 58.
2 Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, *German Cinema* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1971), 13.
3 Rick Worland, *The Horror Film. An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 48.
4 See John L. Flynn, *Cinematic Vampires: The Living Dead on Film and Television, from* The Devil's Castle *(1896) to* Bram Stoker's Dracula (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1992), 21.
5 To name a few: *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1992) shows the vampire rise from his coffin in the same way as in the Murnau film; in 1979, Werner Herzog shot a remake of the film, *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht*; the 2000 film *Shadow of the Vampire* (E. Elias Merhige) tells the story of the making of the film, imagining that actor Max Schreck, who played the role of Orlok, was a real vampire.
6 On *Metropolis* and its multiple versions, see Julie Wosk, '*Metropolis*', *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 2 (2010): 403–8, and Julie Wosk, 'Update on the Film *Metropolis*', *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 4 (2010): 1061–2. What has been called the 'rhetoric of the original', the idealisation of one supposedly original version for marketing reasons, is particular frequent with silent films, and not only because of the present lacunal status of this repertoire; Vinzenz Hediger, '"The Original Is Always Lost": Film History, Copyright Industries and the Problem of Reconstruction', in *Cinephilia: Movies, Love, and Memory*, ed. Malte Hagener and Marijke de Valck (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 137. For example, for Murnau's *Faust* (1926), already at the time of its release, there were several different versions distributed around the world, making the designation of the 'original' Faust problematic; Luciano Berriatua, 'Faust: F.W. Murnau's Original Montage', *William K. Everson Archive*, 1996, accessed 7 August 2017, www.nyu.edu/projects/wke/press/faust/faust.pdf.
7 I am focusing here on three cases, but it is worth mentioning that there have been a number of different musical accompaniments to *Nosferatu*, from organ solo, to jazz ensemble, to gothic industrial.
8 *Nosferatu. Eine Symphonie des Grauens*, DVD, Eureka, 2007.

9 Kevin Jackson, *Nosferatu (1922): Eine Symphonie des Grauens* (London: BFI, 2013), 10.
10 This score was never synchronised to any DVD edition, but only performed in live screenings and released in 1995 as a CD (RCA Red Seal).
11 Gillian Anderson, *Nosferatu*, 1999, accessed 1 August 2017, www.gillianandersonit/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=22&Itemid=29.
12 Anon., *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, 2002, accessed 18 November 2016, www.celtoslavica.de/chiaroscuro/vergleiche/nos.html.
13 Quoted in Anderson, *Nosferatu*.
14 Janina Müller and Tobias Plebuch, 'Toward a Prehistory of Film Music: Hans Erdmann's Score for Nosferatu and the Idea of Modular Form', *The Journal of Film Music* 6, no. 1 (2013): 35.
15 Ibid., 37.
16 Ibid., 35, 41.
17 It is worth repeating that the original score is lost, but since the surviving materials show a rich thematic variety and those innovative traits of internal design described by Müller and Plebuch, we can speculate that some synchronisation between music and visuals might indeed have been part of Erdmann's original score. Hence, the sync points created in the DVD edition under examination, though not undoubtedly assessable as Erdmann and Murnau's intentions, nevertheless seem to follow the spirit and dramaturgical function that we can infer the original score was intended to have.
18 Three notable film examples of this macabre connotation are *Metropolis*, in which we hear the xylophone when Maria sees the skeletons in the catacombs; *Oliver Twist* (David Lean, 1948), when the Arnold Bax score introduces xylophone touches when Oliver sees a coffin in Mr Sowerberry's undertaker shop; and *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (Nathan H. Juran, 1958), in which Bernard Herrmann scores the sword fight with the animated skeleton with a ballet-like piece for xylophone and orchestra.
19 In the Anderson/Kessler reconstruction, the music that scores the first meeting is clearly suggesting a sense of horror, and the vampire motif can be heard when Hutter is met by Orlok at the gate. In the following dinner scene, the tone is similarly menacing, with the vampire motif played again, and with the chiming of the skeleton clock rendered with bells ('death knell') rather than the ting of the triangle used in the Heller reconstruction. The Anderson/Kessler reconstruction also introduces the *Nosferatu* xylophone motif much earlier in the film, when the guest house host tries to talk Hutter into not going to Orlok's castle, instead of the vampire theme used here in the Heller reconstruction. The general impression from the partly synchronised score that can be found on the Internet (www.youtube.com/watch?v=68RYyUYxLjs&t=91s, accessed 18 November 2016) is that the Anderson/Kessler reconstruction plunges us into the horrific dimension of the story from the outset, while the Heller reconstruction unveils Orlok's horrific nature more gradually.
20 It is difficult to ascertain whether the presence of live sound effects was originally envisioned besides that of live music, as there is no mention in the 1922 reviews. I suspect there were none, besides the presence of the triangle producing the tinging of the skeleton clock and the snare drum roll for the herald, which makes me suppose that, if the sound was delivered musically, there must have been no plan to have other non-musical sound effects synchronised live.
21 *Nosferatu – A Symphony of Horrors*, DVD, BFI, 1997.
22 On James Bernard, see David Huckvale, *James Bernard, Composer to Count Dracula: A Critical Biography* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006).
23 James Bernard, *Nosferatu – A Symphony of Horrors (1922) – Original Soundtrack Recording*, The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Nic Raine, Silva America, 1997, SSD 1084.

24 James Bernard, 'Extra Features: James Bernard and the Music', *Nosferatu – A Symphony of Horrors*, DVD (London: BFI, 1997).
25 Ibid.
26 This edition can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=psrgg6ELBxU, accessed 8 November 2017.
27 Thanks to Giovanni Doria Miglietta for helping me identify the pieces.
28 'Unfitting' music and dramatic silences can be deliberate choices, for example in the so-called audiovisual counterpoint. But this is hardly the case here. At 6′36″, one can hear the distorted sound typical of a tape player being started, a sign of a compilation lacking not only artistic intention, but technical care too.
29 These three works are often featured in the same album, for example in *Music for Two Pianos & Piano Four Hands* (Paul Jacobs and Ursula Oppens, Nonesuch, 1978, H-71347) or in *Sonata For Two Pianos / Trois Pièces Faciles – Cinq Pièces Faciles / Concerto Per Due Pianoforti Soli* (Alfons Kontarsky and Aloys Kontarsky, WERGO, WER 6228-2).

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Chapter 11

Electroacoustic Composition and Silent Film

Nicholas Brown

In their recent volume, *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films*, K.J. Donnelly and Ann-Kristin Wallengren address the 'burgeoning' culture of live music for silent films.[1] 'Music', they write, 'has become a means for both musicians and audiences to understand this bygone film art anew.'[2] Yet the nature of that 'means' can be a tendentious matter. Non-traditional approaches to new soundtracks – electronic sounds in particular – may prompt what Blair Davis calls 'a preservationist instinct' among 'film critics, scholars and fans who "froth with rage" at the thought of altering the original exhibition context of silent cinema'.[3] In this chapter, I focus on recent electroacoustic scores for silent films that could be described as '"novel", radical', following Donnelly's schema of polar approaches to silent film scoring.[4] I use the term 'electroacoustic' to refer to compositional practice that uses a set of electronics-based tools for composition, which includes, but is not limited to, computer technology.[5] Such a set of tools may be used exclusively or in combination with acoustic instruments.[6] I investigate how artist-composers use these tools to create sound-image relations that cannot be created by traditional acoustic means. I address a range of techniques, including the possibility of expanded and 'fixed' musical temporalities, the function of automated, repeated musical events, and techniques of stereophonic arrangement. If the medium of composition is electroacoustic sound, then the soundtrack will inevitably be at odds with the film's historical context. Yet I suggest that it is precisely the ahistorical way in which such technologically mediated methods of musical expression are utilised that allows these scores to furnish new insight into their respective silent films.

The musical works I discuss are: (1) the score for Victor Sjöström's *The Phantom Carriage* (1921) by KTL, a musical collaboration between Peter Rehberg and Stephen O'Malley; and (2) selected scores from the BFI publication *Fairy Tales* (BFIVD529). The latter DVD pairs artist-musicians from the experimental music company Touch with early colour stencil films from Pathé.[7] I show how each new score allows a reading of its respective film as a technologically mediated form of art. I also suggest that such innovative approaches to film scoring can be partly understood with reference to wider

curatorial practices in recent and contemporary art, for they engage interpretation and analysis of the film, even though their scoring methods play against historical veracity.[8] New music may well raise the status of silent film in wider culture and increase public awareness of early film heritage. But where that music is technologically mediated, I suggest that it may be more valuable still in furnishing insight that is epistemological and educative in nature.

The process of disseminating films from a historical archive necessitates such tasks as acquiring, repairing, screening, and publishing the filmic material, all of which may be illuminated by an etymological reading of 'curation' (Latin, *curatio*).[9] Beyond these tasks, the decision of an institution-archive to acquire a new score puts sound–image relations within the gift of an artist-composer. The way a composer carries out this responsibility – the musical 'tools' they deploy, their compositional style, etc. – can be of critical significance to the reception of the archival material. Furthermore, the presentation of silent film with a new score serves several sociocultural functions. As Donnelly states, contemporary music can provide 'a point of entry' for newcomers to silents, thus increasing awareness of silent film history in wider culture.[10] From a musical perspective, it offers musicians whose practice typically falls outside commercial music industries an opportunity to extend the reach of their work. Composers primarily active in non-commercial or educational contexts, for instance, may present their music beyond the concert hall, engaging new audiences for their music in the process. The production of new scores for historical films is therefore advantageous for film and contemporary music cultures alike.

Given that institutions, archives, and indeed artists themselves may seek to curate new music for silent film events and publications, the production processes in such projects are in fact redolent of historical exhibition practice. Originally, both film and musical accompaniment came from different sources: the studio and the exhibitor.[11] This raises a fundamental issue in any consideration of silent film music, namely the lack of absolute, fixed relations between sound and image. Such a situation is of course the case in contemporary silent film projects whenever a new score is performed 'live' alongside a pre-recorded film. There is likely to be variation in sound–image relations on the following levels: (1) within a single performance (e.g. some musical element with some relation to some image-element that is in some way modified during the course of a particular live screening-performance); (2) across different performances (the same score might be rendered differently, particularly, though not exclusively, if it is improvised); and (3) between different musical scores for the same silent film, which also includes the possibility of (1) and (2) above. Live performance-screenings of new music/silent film events are thus characterised by fluidity in relations between what is seen and what is heard. As Donnelly and Wallengren put it, 'They appear to offer a unique experience that is qualitatively different from synchronized sound film screenings.'[12]

This issue of fixity in sound–image relations is particularly significant for an investigation of electroacoustic scores for silent films. The use of electronics-based technologies to create a score for a silent film today can be considered analogous with the historical transition from silent to sound film. Consider the variability of projection speed in silent cinema, which meant that filmic time was a flexible value. Projectors were cranked by hand at something like 16 fps until the 1920s, when speeds increased to 24 or 26 fps.[13]

The advent of film sound was marked by the stabilisation of duration, which was itself guaranteed by electric motor technology. As Michel Chion writes, 'sound cinema guaranteed that whatever lasted *x* seconds in the editing would still have this same exact duration in the screening.'[14] This stabilisation of duration identifies the domain of sound film. And it differentiates it from any live screening-performance of a silent film with purely acoustic, musical accompaniment. In the latter, there is likely to be temporal flexibility among relations between sonic events, as well as among sound–image relations. If an acoustic musical score for a silent film is subsequently performed and recorded on fixed media (the domain of sound film), those relations are fixed. Inversely, if the same musical score is performed live, relational flexibility occurs.

The possibility of fixing relations between sound events over time as a result of composing with electronics-based technologies is significant for the practice of scoring silent films. The 'effect' is analogous to the advent of sound film on account of motorised projection, though it has critical implications for live performances of electroacoustic scores at silent film screenings, as well as for synchronised recordings of both on some fixed medium (DVD, etc.). The difference between an electroacoustic score performed 'live' and one rendered via a fixed medium, for example, is less marked than the correlative difference between an acoustic score performed 'live' and one rendered via a fixed medium. This is partly because automation techniques in electroacoustic composition allow precise definition of the duration of particular sonic events (as well as the temporal interrelations *between* such events). The technological mediation of sonic experience thus specifies ('fixes') image–sound relations. This degree of specificity is not present in a silent film event with live acoustic music (such as might be provided by a pianist or orchestra). The nature of these image–sound relations is, of course, an inevitable function of passing the production of sonic events to the metronomic clock signals of electronic circuitry. And I suggest that it is this machine-automated temporal specificity that allows the electroacoustic composer to draw attention to the technical-mechanical nature of silent film production.

An example can be found in how KTL's soundtrack for Victor Sjöström's *The Phantom Carriage* creates musical time. The score uses electronic technology to create musical motion on a much slower scale than would be possible in a purely acoustic context. The glacial drones have an expired, monodic quality that can increase a viewer's awareness of the historical nature of the image. This musico-temporal device gives the soundtrack an

inanimate singularity that resonates with the interminable isolation of the protagonist. It presents extended, temporal structures that raise questions concerning the limits of auditory perception, since human beings stop sensing a regular pulse when sonic events occur at a rate of less than roughly 10 beats per minute (or every six seconds).[15] Electronic music technology thus allows composers to create sonic 'movement' on a scale that, phenomenologically, tends towards the threshold of perception. Such extended musical temporalities correspond with (for instance) the double exposure technique for the visual, ghost effects, given their common basis in technology. In the context of both sound and image, the suspension of disbelief is a function of technological mediation. The 'beyond human' aspect of the film narrative inheres, for the viewer-listener, in the domains of both visual and auditory perception.

During the title sequence of *The Phantom Carriage*, KTL's soundtrack presents two short, percussive sounds.[16] These two 'knocking' sounds have slightly different qualities and are repeated at intervals of a little over one second. The repetitions of each type of percussive sound occur in groups of twelve and three, respectively. This gives the musical structure a cyclical quality, where each sequence comprises a long and a short phrase (i.e. 12 iterations of the first percussive sound, followed by three of the second). This sequence of 15 sounds is repeated three times, followed by a single percussive sound of the first type just before the first frame of the film appears on screen. During these percussive sequences, we hear a soft, predominantly noisy rumble that varies in its intensity and has some semblance of a resonant frequency that relates to the pitch we hear when the first image appears on screen. Furthermore, reverberation is applied to the percussive sound, yet the degree to which it is clearly audible varies over the course of the three sequences. The function of this reverberation is that it interpolates between the abrupt discontinuity of the short percussive sounds and the extended continuity of the soft, noisy rumble. A sound of short duration is thus presented 'against' one of extended duration while sound-processing techniques of delay/reverberation create correspondences between the two durational domains.

Compositional design of this nature points towards what Curtis Roads has identified as part of the 'specificity of the electronic medium', namely the fact that it 'extends the temporal domain of composition to a *multiscale* conception, where we can manipulate an entire composition, or its sections, phrases, and individual sounds with equal ease.'[17] Further, the possibility of automating sonic events is a fundamental facility of electronics-based music. And this facility has the potential to bring attention to the mechanical nature of film experience. Given their cyclical, repetitive nature, we may imagine the percussive 'knocking' sounds to be the consequence of some automated, mechanical action – perhaps some sounds coming from the film's projection (what Chion calls cinema's 'indifferent and automatic unwinding').[18]

The plot of *The Phantom Carriage* concerns the dying wish of Salvation Army Sister Edit (Astrid Holm) to speak with David Holm (Victor Sjöström), a drunkard, from whom she caught consumption during her efforts to bring about a reconciliation between David and his wife, Anna. KTL's score makes use of the illusion of 'spatialisation' that is possible through stereophonic sound, particularly in support of scene changes and characterisation. For instance, the audio mix changes from a relatively 'wide' use of the stereo field for the interior shot of David and Sister Edit, in which they discuss Edit's praying for David's prosperity, to one that is 'narrower' for the exterior conversation between David's soul and the ghost of his old friend, Georges (Tore Svennberg). Georges was the last person to die on the previous New Year's Eve, and therefore condemned to drive Death's carriage.[19] The effect is of the soundtrack 'focusing' on the centre of the frame for the second scene, which is a composite of two shots: (1) David (left) and Georges (right), having a conversation; and (2) David lying motionless in a graveyard after a drunken fight, his head at the centre of the frame. The transition from the use of a wide stereophonic field for the soundtrack in the previous scene to one that 'focuses' on the centre of that field is striking, given the central location of David's lifeless body in relation to the active bodies of David and Georges either side. Towards the end of the film, when the souls of David and Georges are watching Anna and the children, subtle techniques of stereophonic arrangement recur. The soundtrack sets up two 'layers', one of which spans the stereo field, and the other a narrower area across the centre. This dichotomy presents the (visual) coexistence of the dead and the living on screen in a way that is not only characteristic of musical composition on a fundamental level (coevality, given sonic diversity), but critically a sign of electronic control.

Several of the soundtracks on *Fairy Tales*, a BFI DVD of colour stencil films from Pathé, draw out the heterogeneity of theatrical-mechanical production techniques in early film. There is a considerable amount of musical work with sampled audio, which includes noise-based material recorded from real-world sources, including film projectors. This makes a notable diversion from the pitched-based materials of more traditional approaches, i.e. the sounds of acoustic, musical instruments. This kind of creative work with sampled sound invokes influential practices of mid-twentieth-century *musique concrète*, given that the sonic provenance of many of the sounds used for the various soundtracks on *Fairy Tales*, qua musical material, is similarly unconventional.[20] Such non-traditional approaches to the source of musical sound gives the BFI's publication, as a whole, the quality of empirical, exploratory work. Indeed, in her recent volume, Jennie Gottschalk defines 'experimental music' as 'a position – of openness, of inquiry, of uncertainty, of discovery.'[21] And since Touch is described on the BFI DVD cover insert as an 'experimental music label', the approaches to musical composition taken by its artist-composers would seem to elicit meaning from the word 'experimental' that shares affinities with methods of scientific investigation.

The notion that creative practice might enable protoscientific enquiry also occurs in twentieth-century art, not least in connection with the rise in prominence of the art curator. In *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, Paul O'Neill writes about 'the professionalisation of contemporary curating', and notes that 'the ascendancy of the curatorial gesture in the 1990s began to establish curatorship as a potential nexus for discussion, critique and debate'.[22] And as David Balzer notes in his short history of curationism, a curator 'could orchestrate the kind of rebellion that was appropriate only in his gallery-cum-laboratory.'[23] The issue is one of an intermediary sometimes explaining and sometimes obfuscating or 'mystifying' the meaning of an art-object. According to Balzer, 'In demystifying exhibition- and art-making, and then remystifying them on new terms, the curator self-mystifies, becoming alluring and vexing in equal measure.'[24]

Mike Harding of Touch was appointed by the BFI as curator of the soundtracks for *Fairy Tales*. In the accompanying booklet, he writes about a diversity of backgrounds among the commissioned artists: 'some classically trained, others not formally at all (and others still who would perhaps not even call themselves musicians).'[25] And so the association between Touch's experimental ethos and these early films makes *Fairy Tales*, as a cultural project, considerably more than the dutiful (curative) dissemination of film heritage. It exceeds its archival responsibilities not simply by commissioning new scores (i.e. engaging a contemporary, 'artistic' response), but, critically, by pursuing a curatorial ethos that promises interdisciplinarity and disquisitive art-science.

As well as curating the musical content of *Fairy Tales*, Harding contributes a soundtrack in collaboration with Michael Esposito. Interestingly, the Harding-Esposito score for *Le Spectre Rouge* (1907) is one of the most radical in its compositional approach. It uses sound recordings of film projection technology, which reminds the viewer of the presence of mechanical automation necessary for viewing the material of film. According to the DVD booklet, 'the film projectors recorded included a 1902 Gaumont "beater" machine, a 1906 Butchers projector . . . and a Gaumont Chrono from between 1912 and 1914'.[26] This approach works against music's conventional status in film soundtracks as something constituted in sound *for* the benefit of supporting the experience of viewing the film content, and suggests instead that it might be something *of* or *from* such an experience. The score presents sonic elements from an acoustic environment, namely the exhibition of film in a theatrical context. Our aural attention is therefore directed to sounds that are the consequence of projection technology, which is itself the guarantor of motion perception in cinema.

The subject of Pathé's *Le Spectre Rouge* is magic: bewitching trickery performed by a demonic conjurer. Harding and Esposito's soundtrack combines the sounds of projection with so-called 'electronic voice phenomena' – instances of auditory pareidolia from the perception of recorded sound. In presenting the cyclical sounds of projection (sounds that are the consequence

of the mechanical actions of film technology), it accentuates the contract between human perception/electromechanics in technologically mediated aesthetic experience. We 'hear' voices 'in' audio taken from a silent film studio in Santa Barbara. We 'see' motion 'through' the repetition of near-identical images. Thus, the soundtrack (in a sense, an enquiry into audiovisual technology) draws out the technological roots of film experience. Not only does it invoke the question of motion perception in cinema, but also the possibility of falsity in our hearing.

Harding's statement on the diversity of training among contributing artist-composers not only corresponds with the interdisciplinarity of film culture, but also of the theatre, which is itself the source of core techniques in early film-making. Philip Jeck's contribution for *Cendrillon ou la pantoufle merveilleuse* (1907), for instance, makes limited use of stereophonic spatiality in a way that brings attention to conventions of theatrical staging. The director of this filmic presentation of the Cinderella fairy tale was Albert Capellani, who had a background in theatre as both actor and director when he started working for Pathé. Indeed, as Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs note, Capellani made frequent use of theatrical tableaux techniques in films such as *Les Misérables* (1913), *Quatre-vingt-treize* (1921), and *Notre Dame de Paris* (1911).[27]

Jeck's soundtrack for *Cendrillon ou la pantoufle merveilleuse* comprises ensemble pieces, much like the theatrical action: multiple elements coexist in a montage of string samples interlaced with synthetic sounds, with no significant 'focusing' on any individual sonic element in the audio mix. The width of the theatrical stage and of the photographic frame share affinity with the 'width' of the stereo field in the soundtrack. The coincidence of disparate events and resulting textural eclecticism in Jeck's soundtrack suggests conventions of early film style, which predate the mobility of the camera and visual profiling of tight angles and close-ups. Indeed, the fact that no particular sound source is isolated and treated as foreground audio material brings awareness to the *absence* of the central dialogue speaker, which has become a primary technology of sound propagation in film since the silent era.

There is nonetheless some cyclical (and therefore somewhat 'focused') use of sonic material in Jeck's soundtrack when it attends to visual periodicity on screen. Consider, for instance, the looped sounds used for the external and closing dance sequences.[28] Both sequences show actors engaging in repeated, physical movements. These same movements are copied by other actors, that is, groups of individuals execute the same, choreographed movements. This repetition of bodily movements and their duplication in other bodies shares affinity with the repetition-duplication of looped sounds in the musical soundtrack.

The possibility of 'looping' or the exact repetition of an instruction over a period of time is something that can be efficiently achieved via mechanically assisted art – especially, but not exclusively, where that art is electronics-based. The repetitions of sonic material in Jeck's soundtrack are exact,

whereas the correlating repetitions of the actors' movements are, naturally, inexact. The soundtrack thus seems to aspire to exactitude in duplication on behalf of the moving images. This allows the viewer a critical distance from the film and affirms the different origins/histories of image and sound in silent film culture. It heightens the viewer's awareness of human, bodily movement on screen, which in turn allows a critical reading of electronic technologies of sonic (and, by association, filmic) production.

Achim Mohné's soundtrack for *La Poule aux oeufs d'or* (1905) presents an eclectic assemblage of field recordings and other recorded audio sources, such as ahistorical sounds from computer games. Consider the scene titled 'The Fantastic Fowls' House'.[29] The shot of a hurdy-gurdy is accompanied by the guitar-like sounds of plucked strings. The selection of this audio sample to accompany this instance implies some organological relation with the instrument on screen. But it also avoids realism in the image–sound relationship: there is no drone-like sound for the hurdy-gurdy, even though the character is seen winding the crank. The soundtrack thus assumes a critical distance from the image. Despite heeding diegetic convention to some extent, Mohné's technique nonetheless creates a certain *anempathetic* distance from the moving image, thus presenting it as a historical artefact.[30] The guitar-like sound at the appearance of the hurdy-gurdy is of course achievable with acoustic means. The difference is the sonic context, the basis of which is electronic (consider the accompanying bass sound, for instance). While the guitar sample moves 'towards' the image, the electronic-sounding bass retains its technologically mediated nature, and thus its 'distance'.

After the change of scene, we hear an electronic sample of a bell-like sound when a character picks up an egg from each of two different nests. Here, the soundtrack returns, emphatically, to its ahistorical, electronic basis; the bell sound betrays the mark of technological intervention. The morphology of the bell is cut short, before it has fully decayed, concluding with an audible audio glitch. Thus, the work is characterised by a range of approaches that are sometimes critical, ahistorical, divergent, and sometimes diegetic, homologous. What the technology permits, in this case, is essentially an expanded range of approaches to image–sound relations. The breadth of this range is made clear by both the simultaneous and subsequent presentation of diverse, sonic events.

As a curated project, *Fairy Tales* arguably eclipses its roots in film culture. Touch's ethos as promoter of experimental music practice is strongly inherent. It is clear that this ethos does not result in conventional, 'supporting' soundtracks for these Pathé films (e.g. 'historically accurate', with reference to Donnelly's schema). But I would argue that the 'novel' approaches discussed (with particular reference to the use of electronics-based technologies) are what allow these soundtracks to offer the viewer-listener insight into the historical condition of their respective silent films. The artist-composers of *Fairy Tales* make discursive textures with sound-objects, the source of which is often mechanical (meaning the sounds frequently tend towards noise, rather than pitch) and is not necessarily in view on screen.

The scores discussed in this chapter, which have been created with contemporary music technologies, furnish new means of understanding historical film. A significant part of their function, I suggest, is in shifting the primary role of a soundtrack from 'support' towards 'analysis', from underwriting emotion and pace, for example, to a quasi-scientific investigation of film as a technologically mediated form of expression. Their mode is contemporary; their remit is interpretation. Not only are they concerned with preservation and dissemination, but also with critical enquiry. The technologies they deploy permit new readings of historical artefacts by calling to attention the technologies with which such artefacts were made. Such activity shares affinity with the origin of 'curation'. Indeed, 'care' carries particular nuance with reference to silent film, given the volatile nature of the film stock. Silent film scoring of any kind puts it within the gift of an artist-caretaker to unlock image–sound relations. For today's electroacoustic composers, that gift is endowed with a particular facility for furnishing insight into yesterday's films, even if it means challenging 'preservationist' standards.

Notes

1 K.J. Donnelly and Ann-Kristin Wallengren, 'Music and the Resurfacing of Silent Film: A General Introduction', in *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films*, ed. K.J. Donnelly and Ann-Kristin Wallengren (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1.
2 Donnelly and Wallengren, *Today's Sounds*, 5.
3 Blair Davis, 'Old Films, New Sounds: Screening Silent Cinema with Electronic Music', *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 17, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 92.
4 See K.J. Donnelly, 'How Far Can Too Far Go? Radical Approaches to Silent Film Music', in *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films*, ed. K.J. Donnelly and Ann-Kristin Wallengren (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 13. Given its affinity with traditional modes of composition, I use the term 'score' to retain a sense of the reflective *activity* involved in the process of creating a musical soundtrack (i.e. the verb 'to score'). By this, I mean the activities on the part of a composer in encountering and creating some musical response to some film.
5 As Thom Holmes notes, 'The term electroacoustic music is widely used to denote music that integrates sounds from the natural world with audio processing as well as synthesized sounds.' See Thom Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music*, 5th edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 231.
6 In using the term 'acoustic' in this chapter without the 'electro-' prefix, I am referring to sound that is not produced via electronic means.
7 Established in 1982, Touch is a British audiovisual organisation that publishes experimental electronic music (www.touch33.net).
8 For a compendium of essays that addresses 'the curatorial' in relation to 'an event of knowledge', see Jean-Paul Martinon, ed., *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
9 For an introduction to the archive movement in film preservation, see Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame* (London: BFI, 1994).
10 K.J. Donnelly, 'Music Cultizing Film: KTL and the New Silents', *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 13, no. 1 (2015): 32.
11 See Bryony Dixon's interview comments in Pamela Hutchinson, 'Silent Harmonies', *Sight & Sound*, September 2016, 56.
12 Donnelly and Wallengren, *Today's Sounds*, 1.

13 'fps' = frames per second. See Kevin Withall, *Studying Silent Cinema* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2009), 9, 14n9. See also Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1968), 243.
14 Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 16.
15 See Curtis Roads, *Composing Electronic Music: A New Aesthetic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 139. The apparent stasis of the drones might be described as a type of 'planar motion', such as defined by Alessandro Cipriani and Maurizio Giri, namely 'sound structures where no parameter moves in an obvious manner'. See Alessandro Cipriani and Maurizio Giri, *Electronic Music and Sound Design: Theory and Practice with Max and MSP, Vol. 2* (Rome: ConTempoNet, 2014), 478.
16 Tartan DVD release, *The Phantom Carriage: KTL Edition* (TVD3754, 2008).
17 Roads, *Composing Electronic Music*, 9, emphasis in original.
18 Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 9.
19 The scene change occurs at 59:08 on the Tartan DVD release.
20 For instance, Pierre Schaeffer's *Étude aux Chemins de Fer* (1948), which shapes musical meaning from the recorded sounds of a train station, exemplifies the use of recording technology to present/transform real-world sounds for the purpose of effecting musical experiences – in Schaeffer's words, 'to abstract the noise from its dramatic context and raise it to the status of musical material'. See Pierre Schaeffer, *In Search of a Concrete Music*, trans. Christine North and John Dack (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), 24.
21 Jennie Gottschalk, *Experimental Music since 1970* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1.
22 Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (London: MIT Press, 2012), 43.
23 David Balzer, *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 46.
24 Ibid., 47.
25 See the booklet accompanying the BFI DVD, *Fairy Tales: Early Colour Stencil Films from Pathé* (BFIVD529, 2012), 6.
26 Ibid., 7.
27 See Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 50.
28 The first sequence occurs between 06:33 and 07:12 (chapter 18 on the BFI DVD). The second sequence occurs between 14:36 and the end of the same chapter.
29 From 02:32 (chapter 9) on the BFI DVD.
30 Here, I would cite Michel Chion's definition of anempathetic effects in film sound, i.e. where music exhibits 'conspicuous indifference to the situation'. See Chion, *Audio-Vision*, 8.

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Chapter 12

The 'Silent' Film in Modern Times

James Wierzbicki

Most modern languages have a retronym for cinema of the sort that existed before the widespread acceptance of the technology that allowed for the recording, on a single strip of celluloid, of not just an image track, but also a soundtrack. But only English, at least among the European languages, calls these early films 'silent'. In German, Russian, Spanish, Italian, and French, for example, the type of film that is the subject of this collection is referred to as, respectively, *stummer Film*, *немое кино*, *película muda*, *cinema muto*, and *cinéma muet*. The adjective in all these cases is the equivalent not of 'silent' but of 'mute'. English dictionaries indeed include 'silent' among the secondary definitions of 'mute', and vice versa. Yet the meanings of the words are not quite the same. Whereas 'silent' describes something that does not make sound, 'mute' describes something that does not, or cannot, speak.

That its title character speaks is what made *The Jazz Singer*, in 1927, such a sensation. As has been pointed out by numerous historians, films with integrated soundtracks had been in existence since as early as 1922, and the idea of films accompanied by recorded music had been around, although seldom effectively realised, since 1900.[1] But with few exceptions that today are notable primarily as experiments (for example, excerpts from the play *Der Brandstifter* that figured into a 1922 demonstration in Berlin of the Tri-Ergon system of sound-on-film recording, or the short dramatic films *Love's Old Sweet Song* and *Abraham Lincoln* exhibited by Lee de Forest in New York in 1924), the successful 'sound films' that predate *The Jazz Singer* do not involve words articulated by fictional persons. To be sure, the Vitaphone shorts that Warner Bros. started exhibiting in 1926 include words that audience members could hear, but the words come from real people, in the form of songs or announcements, or of political speeches or comic patter. In contrast, *The Jazz Singer* gives the illusion of spoken – or sung – words coming from someone who exists only as a figment of the film-makers', and thus the audience's, imagination.

A peculiarly twisted logic can show the apparent sources of 'My Mammy', probably *The Jazz Singer*'s most famous song, bouncing this way and that over the course of a quarter-century. When Al Jolson first interpolated the song into

Harold Atteridge's and Sigmund Romberg's *Sinbad* in 1921, the audience surely got the impression that it was being sung by the character – a porter in ancient Baghdad – that Jolson played. Yet when Jolson sang the very same song, in much the same way, and with the same blackface make-up, in the Vitaphone films that helped preface the 1926 showings of Warner Bros.' feature-length *Don Juan* and *The Better 'Ole*, the audience was made very mindful that this was Jolson's trademark song being sung, obviously, by Jolson. Encountering the same song at the end of 1927's *The Jazz Singer*, however, an audience truly engaged with the film's drama would have attributed it not to Jolson but to Jack Robin (né Jacob Rabinowitz), the prodigal character played by Jolson. A year later, when the Brunswick label released a 78 rpm recording of 'My Mammy' that was popular enough to reach the no. 2 spot on the Billboard chart, the song's 'ownership' would have reverted to Jolson. But in the 1930 film *Mammy*, and again in the 1939 film *Rose of Washington Square*, the song would have been attributed not to Jolson but to the characters Jolson played, a minstrel showman named Al Fuller in the first case and a veteran Broadway star named Ted Cotter in the second. To take the idea to an absurd extreme, in *The Jolson Story*, the actual singing comes from Jolson, via a new recording made especially for use in the 1946 biopic, but within the narrative the singing *seems* to come from the character Jack Robin, as played by a fictional Jolson, who is played by the actor Larry Parks.

It can get complicated, although rarely so complicated as the last example given above. Nevertheless, since the spoken word is nowadays taken for granted as an essential element of cinema, we need occasionally to be reminded that it was the matter of the voice – not noises genuine or manufactured, not music diegetic or otherwise, not the cumbersome recording and playback technology needed to make a filmic 'object' with music and noises – that prompted the most forceful objections to the new 'sound film'.

Early criticisms often referred to 'words' or 'speech' or 'language', and this, Michel Chion reminds us, has deflected us from the real issue:

> As film began to talk, the problem was not text: silent cinema had already integrated text through the bastard device of intertitles. It was the voice, as material presence, as utterance, or as muteness – the voice as being, double, shadow of the image, as a power – the voice as a threat of loss and seduction for the cinema.[2]

More recently, Des O'Rawe summarised the largely commercial argument that the so-called 'talkies' 'jeopardized the internationalism of cinema, and undermined the nurturing of a culturally heterogeneous . . . film culture'.[3] But O'Rawe also expressed an extreme opinion:

> The arrival of synchronized sound . . . obliterated an invaluable, if fragile, vision of cinema as an art form. With sound, a cinema that could

> derive its aesthetic specificity from the visual arts and music, a cinema of images, and images of images, was supplanted by a cinema of plots and protagonists, second-hand theatricality and filmed dialogue.[4]

Perhaps striking a balance that predates both Chion's book and O'Rawe's article, the film and drama critic John Simon, in defence against charges that his film commentaries focused too much on the works' literary qualities, aligned his own thoughts with those of the French director René Clair. Clair, as we know from the often-quoted letter he wrote after experiencing *The Jazz Singer* in London, was intrigued by the possibilities of what he called the *cinéma sonore* but had serious misgivings about the *cinéma parlant*.[5] Indeed, as Simon points out, a 'theme of regret at the coming' not of the 'sound film' but of the 'talkies' 'runs through . . . Clair's entire creative life'. Referring to Clair's 1950 *Cinema Yesterday and Today*, Simon focuses on the idea that for Clair it was the apparent 'reality' of the spoken word that 'made the viewer lose the feeling of dream that the sight of the silent shadows [had] created in him.'[6]

One has only to look around – at the commercial and critical success of such recent films as Martin Scorsese's *Hugo* and Michel Hazanavicius's *The Artist*, or at the popularity of events in which vintage films are accompanied by live performances of newly composed scores, at the veritable flood of academic books and articles – to get the impression that 'silent' films are now more prominent than at any time since their supersession by the cinema of recorded sound in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[7]

But why is this so? Is the new interest in an old style of cinema simply a collective exercise in pseudo-nostalgia for a bygone era that today no one actually remembers? Does the attraction that silent film holds for jazz and pop musicians really have anything to do with 'the "crisis" in the music industry and the proliferation of ageing musicians wishing to branch out'?[8] Is it just a novelty, because 'nothing seems more contemporary in recent film than the anachronisms of silent cinema'?[9]

To all of the above, a fair enough answer is 'yes'. But there are other questions, for which 'yes' – or 'no' – will not suffice, and several of them form the seeds of this chapter.

Examples

This chapter deals with the 'silent' film in modern times, that is, the narrative film made by a film-maker with full and easy access to the equipment that makes possible a film in which people speak but who has nevertheless chosen to make a film in which people do *not* speak. Such films, one could say, are aberrations, for surely with the 'coming of sound' not just recorded music and noises, but also the spoken voice, became a normal part of the narrative film's soundtrack. In the modern 'silent' film, characters are not mute because technology has forced them to be so; they are mute because the

film-maker has self-consciously *made* them mute. Why would a director in effect *force* silence upon his or her characters? What is the point?

Scholars for years have debated the point of the two 'silent' films that Charles Chaplin made after the mechanism for the 'sound film' was more or less firmly established. The consensus seems to be that Chaplin was not at all, as he was once thought to be, 'timid, regressive, or anti-technology in his cinematic approach', a radical conservative 'resistant to innovation, clinging to an outmoded form of cinema'.[10] Rather, today Chaplin is generally believed to have 'silenced' the main characters' voices in *City Lights* (1931) and *Modern Times* (1936) for reasons that have an almost revolutionary flavour. Technically speaking, of course, both of these efforts *are* 'sound films'; along with music, their soundtracks include diegetic noises as well as an abundance of slapstick-style sound effects, and they also include the sound of the human voice. But the sounds, especially the vocal sounds, are used in a way that subverts the notion – already prevalent by 1930 – that the new 'sound film' was *ipso facto* superior to all that had come before.

'To the champions of talkies as a more realistic art form', writes Jean-Loup Bourget, '[Chaplin] retorts by dismantling the illusion of synchronized sound'; he 'satirizes the new technique by turning its own devices against itself'.[11] Chaplin's satire of sound technology is perhaps most obvious in the very first scene of *City Lights*, which shows a crowd gathered to witness the unveiling of a monumental statue while the air around them is filled with an incomprehensibly garbled babble of apparently empty rhetoric from first a male politician and then a female patron. Assuming that moviegoers in 1931 were as sensitive to the 'issues' as sophisticated film audiences of later decades, Garrett Stewart suggests that this 'caw, rasp, and clatter of mechanical gibberish . . . is instantly audible as Chaplin's send-up of the talking film which this movie so resolutely isn't'. Lest anyone doubt Chaplin's intention here, Stewart writes, Chaplin in effect 'underscored' the satire with camera techniques:

> The camera pulls back only a foot or two emphatically and solely to reveal a microphone placed in front of the speakers; clearly this opening implies not simply a blast at ceremonial bombast but a sideswipe as well at all mechanically reproduced human sound, whether merely amplified or broadcast by radio, a bit of farce at one with Chaplin's well-publicized contempt for the mechanically synchronized film sound-track.[12]

Modern Times includes many more instances of vocal sound, but none of them is mechanically garbled. With one exception, however, all of these vocal sounds are somehow mediated by technology, and perhaps this too is a comment by Chaplin on what he regarded as the *un*realistic quality of the increasingly mechanised talkies. Early in the film, the audience hears, as Chaplin's 'tramp' character supposedly hears, a barrage of complaints and orders barked by the factory's director through what seems to be an early version of closed-circuit

television; still in the factory setting, but off the floor and in the director's posh office, the audience hears as well the pitch for a new-fangled employee 'feeding machine' delivered via a disc by the Sales Talk Transcription Company, Inc.; less ominously, and after the plot has grown comically tangled, the audience hears about the tramp's imminent release from jail by means of a straightforward radio newscast. The exception to all this comes near the film's end, when the reticent tramp, now employed at a restaurant that famously features singing waiters, is all but forced to take centre stage and deliver a song.

Like all the songs Jolson performs throughout *The Jazz Singer*, the one song in the penultimate scene of *Modern Times* marks a turning point in film history, although in this case the history is not so much general as focused on the work of an individual. To claim that it is merely 'a charming song and dance number' is to miss the point.[13] With its mish-mash of fake French and fake Italian words, the song *is* charming, and it indeed suggests that Chaplin, 'if he had condescended to the craze of the times', 'could have created a musical comedy during the transitional period.'[14] At the same time, however, the song rings a death knell for a much-beloved character.

An interesting comparison might be made between Chaplin's 'tramp', who made his debut in 1914, and Harpo Marx, who first presented himself to the public four years earlier. Whereas Marx's persona was cultivated for the vaudeville and Broadway stage and was 'mute' by choice, Chaplin's 'tramp', at least at first, was 'mute' by necessity, because he was never anything but a filmic entity. Knowing he had a good thing going, Harpo Marx wisely maintained his 'silence' as he and his brothers established their collective Hollywood career with such early 'sound films' as *The Cocoanuts* (1929), *Animal Crackers* (1930), and *Monkey Business* (1931); indeed, Harpo Marx comically kept 'mum' until shortly before his death in 1964. Chaplin similarly in *City Lights* had his 'tramp' remain as silent as he had always been, but it is likely that by 1936 he felt that the character's appeal had worn thin. It is rather an exaggeration to say that by allowing the 'tramp' to sing Chaplin 'profoundly imagined his own immolation as a screen artist on the wheels of progress', for Chaplin went on to write, direct, and – significantly – act in 'sound films' until 1967.[15] Still, for the 'tramp' to give up silence in effect was to give up the ghost.

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Chaplin's *Modern Times* likely counts as a cinematic masterpiece. The same can hardly be said for Mel Brooks's 1976 *Silent Movie*, which surely marks the ebb-point in an otherwise brilliant career. Nevertheless, *Silent Movie* is worth considering because it demonstrates how much the public's familiarity with 'silent' film had changed over the course of a half-century, and it sets up a contrast for the discussion of the recent 'silent' films that concludes this chapter. *Silent Movie* tells the story of a modern-day director who attempts to revive his failing career, and the failing studio with which he is under

contract, by amusing the public with – of all things! – a silent movie. Most of its jokes amount to run-of-the-mill slapstick and sight gags involving the Hollywood stars (Burt Reynolds, James Caan, Liza Minnelli, Paul Newman, Anne Bancroft) the director recruits for his effort. But two of its jokes warrant at least a mention, and its opening sequence, which is not a joke at all, triggers thoughts about what it means for a film to be truly silent.

One of the two reasonably good jokes is musical. When the scene eventually shifts from Hollywood to the East Coast, for the sake of introducing the financial corporation that is threatening a hostile takeover of the hapless director's studio, the on-screen image is that of the New York cityscape but the music that marks the transition is an arrangement of the song 'San Francisco' (from the 1936 film of the same title). After an iteration of the song's familiar chorus, the audience hears the orchestra gradually but quickly breaking off its performance; after a brief silence, the audience hears a few taps of the conductor's baton, then the chorus of the Rodgers and Hart song 'Manhattan'. The other halfway decent joke is reminiscent of what Chaplin did at the end of *Modern Times* when he baited his audience with hints that his famously 'mute' character might, at last, break his silence. The director tells the studio head about his success thus far with recruiting big-name actors; together, they come up with the idea of recruiting yet one more, the French mime Marcel Marceau, and the studio head suggests that the director right then and there telephone Marceau at his Paris home. Wearing his standard make-up and outfit, Marceau goes through one of his standard routines and finally answers the phone. The intertitles show the director asking Marceau if he would like to participate in his 'silent movie' project. Marceau thinks only for a moment and then, literally, says 'Non!' And that, coming from a famously mute performer, is the film's only spoken word.

Silent Movie features a score by John Morris that in many ways violates the conventions of silent film accompaniment that we know from all the advice columns that appeared in the trade journals *c.*1910. The music contains a great many 'hit' points that instead of coming across as funny only call attention to themselves; it seldom sustains through a scene or tries to capture a scene's overall mood; it starts and stops often to give way to slapstick-like sound effects for pratfalls, collisions, punches, and the like. For all that, Morris's score has a presence throughout the film that adequately enough conveys the film's low-brow comic attitude. It is strange, however, that the music does not begin until the film has played for a minute and 20 seconds. This opening scene shows the director and his two chipper friends driving along a Los Angeles boulevard and then stopping to offer a lift to a heavily pregnant woman, but it plays to a soundtrack that is blank. Especially for a person who experiences *Silent Movie* at home and has just heard the 20th Century-Fox audio logo blaring over the on-screen menu, the silence comes as a shock – one is likely to think that someone has accidentally pressed the 'MUTE' button on the DVD player's

remote control. The acting and the intertitles here are arguably funny, but there is nothing funny at all about the absence of sound. Indeed, the silence – a genuine and absolute silence that seems to have no reason for being and carries with it no explanation – is downright unnerving.

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An unnerving silence also figures in Michel Hazanavicius's 2011 *The Artist*, an award-winning film that – as did Stanley Donen's and Gene Kelly's 1952 *Singin' in the Rain* in a brightly comic way, and as did John Schlesinger's 1975 *The Day of the Locust* in a darkly grim way – tells a story about actors for the 'silent' film coming to grips with the new sound technology. In this case, however, the intent of the unnerving silence is soon enough made clear. The silence is encountered shortly after the film's central character, a veteran of the 'silent' screen who openly scoffs at speculation about the 'talkies', attends the screening of a young actress's 'sound test'. Since *The Artist* is a 'silent' film, the audience does not actually hear the actress's voice, but all the people in the screening room apparently hear it, and one gets the impression, as the clip is accompanied by quietly plaintive music, that everyone except the veteran actor thinks the test went more or less all right. The next scene shows the actor in his dressing room. Unlike the entirety of the film thus far, this scene has no music, and the effect of its silence is stunning.

After brooding for a while, the actor sets his water glass down on his dressing table and is startled – as surely is the film's audience – by a loud clink. He experiments a few more times with the glass, then with other objects at hand. Befuddled, he panics, but amidst the clutter of small 'genuine' sounds the loud 'fictional' sound of his screaming is completely muted. His dog starts to bark. The telephone rings. Panicking even more, the actor runs outside to hear first the distant sound of traffic and then a whoosh of wind and then a crescendo of giggles from a passing bevy of dancing girls. Suddenly, as the actor puts his hands over his ears, the diegetic noise ceases. The actor looks upward and sees a feather floating to the ground; the feather floats in silence, as one expects of a floating feather, yet when it comes to rest on the pavement it makes a thunderous crash. At this point the camera shifts to reveal the actor in bed, sweatily waking from what was a nightmare. The nightmare scene lasts almost two minutes; the scene that has the actor getting out of bed and heading off to the bathroom lasts only 35 seconds, yet it almost seems longer, so stifling is the total silence in which it transpires.

Surrealistic and scary, the sequence just described stands out boldly in a film that at heart is a romantic comedy. But it stands out as well because, like the opening of *Silent Movie*, it demonstrates how disconcerting actual silence in a filmic context can be. For various reasons, three other moments in *The Artist* also stand out, although none of them is as gripping as the nightmare scene, and all three of them depend for their effectiveness on intertitles. One

of these, and the least subtle of the lot, occurs near the film's end, when it appears that the now despondent and out-of-work actor is about to take his own life. There is a long moment of genuine silence as the camera shows him holding the revolver, and thus the large-lettered 'Bang!' that suddenly appears on the screen likely causes the audience to think that the actor has indeed shot himself. But then the image cuts to show that the friendly young actress coming to the actor's aid has gently crashed her car into a tree. Like the suspenseful several seconds that precede the apparently loud intertitle, the several seconds that follow are devoid of musical underscore, and one suspects that in the theatre the soundtrack's gap would have been easily filled with uncomfortable laughter.

The just-described scene stands out because it reminds us that even in a 'silent' film the audience tends to 'hear' sounds that exist not in the real world but only in the imagined world of the filmic narrative. In the two other standout scenes there is no illusionary sound to be heard; with their textual content, however, both of them make telling reference to something else that *The Artist* – like all 'silent' films, new or old – so obviously lacks. In the first of these, presented right at the start, a theatrical screening shows the actor playing the part of a secret agent who is being tortured for the sake of information. 'I won't talk!' the agent mutters during an electric shock treatment; as he turns up the power, one of the villains via upper-case letters shouts 'SPEAK!'; before making his heroic escape, the agent quietly growls, but this time with no less than three exclamation marks, 'I won't say a word!!!' The second text-based example comes deep into the film, after the narrative has demonstrated that the veteran actor and his long-suffering wife are having serious marital problems. As the actor sits listening to a phonograph recording whose musical content is never revealed, the wife says: 'We have to talk.' In response to her husband's non-response, she pleadingly asks: '*Why* do you refuse to talk?' The wife is referring, of course, not to her husband's stubborn career decisions but to the breakdown of communication in their relationship. In the course of *The Artist*'s narrative, this domestic scene is little more than a bump in the road, yet for the astute filmgoer its double entendre resonates aplenty.

Conclusions

The Mel Brooks and Michel Hazanavicius efforts just discussed are 'silent' films *about* 'silent' film, and so it is to be expected that they somehow comment – jokingly or profoundly, effectively or not – on the many ways in which 'silent' film differs from the sort of film that requires no retronymic adjective. 'Silent' films whose subject matter is something other than 'silent' film have no need to do that. Such films are simply films, just like most films made between 1900 and 1927 were simply films.

Low-quality 'silent' films abound in modern times. A brief search on Google or YouTube will reveal a noisy gaggle of them, mostly made by amateurs who

apparently have lots of time on their hands, and most of them little more than silly parodies of vintage 'silent' film not as it actually was but as it has long been presented on television and in video collections. But out there are also serious 'silent' films of high quality. Listed in chronological order, the better ones among them include Aki Kaurismäki's 1999 *Juha*, Andrew Leman's 2005 *The Call of Cthulhu*, the 'A Time for Freedom' episode of Hsiao-Hsien Hou's 2005 *Three Times*, Esteban Sapir's 2007 *La Antena*, Otto Kylmälä's 2011 *The Force That Through the Green Fire Fuels the Flower*, the second half of Miguel Gomes's 2012 *Tabu*, Pablo Berger's 2012 *Blancanieves*, Gareth Rees's 2014 *Written in Dust*, Celia Rowlson-Hall's 2015 *Ma*, Adam Gonzalez's 2015 *Roma*, and Sharon Wilharm's 2016 *Providence*. Surveying this list, it is interesting to note how many of these modern-day 'silent' films come from countries that have something other than English as their language.

As Michel Chion observed in the passage quoted early in this chapter, so many of the serious film-makers who in the late 1920s worried about the 'coming of sound' identified the problem not as language per se but as the sonic manifestation of language.[16] If the makers of the just-mentioned modern-day 'silent' films had decided to take the traditional path, their hoped-for international audiences would have had to deal with subtitles as well as the sounds of English, Finnish, Spanish, Portuguese, and an old Taiwanese version of Mandarin. Instead, they gave their audiences films that transcend the borders and barriers of spoken language. And by jettisoning spoken language, perhaps they took on board something of the cinematic experience that had once upon a time been of great value.

René Clair ended his 1929 letter on 'the art of sound' with a bleak paragraph on film's future. Because of the new technology, he wrote:

> The screen has lost more than it has gained. It has conquered the world of voices, but it has lost the world of dreams. I have observed people leaving the cinema after seeing a talking film. They might have been leaving a music hall, for they showed no sign of the delightful numbness which used to overcome us after a passage through the silent land of pure images. They talked and laughed, and hummed the tunes they had just heard. *They had not lost their sense of reality*.[17]

It is certainly possible to lose one's sense of reality while taking in a well-made 'sound film'. But is it easier to enter the dream world, one wonders, when one is experiencing an equally well-made 'silent' film? If so, is the easier entry really made possible at least in part because the audience members are freed from the specificity of characters' voices? If the characters' muteness indeed has something to do with it, is the necessary muteness of characters in old 'silent' films substantially different to the arbitrary muteness of characters in new 'silent' films? Is it perhaps the ability, and the power, to deprive characters of their natural voices that today draws directors to the 'silent' film?

Is it the fact that characters are *made* to be 'silent' that attracts audiences to the modern 'silent' film?

These questions defy easy answers, yet they warrant being asked each time a new 'silent' film catches the attention of the public.

Notes

1 Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926–1931* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997); Scott Eyman, *The Speed of Sound: Hollywood and the Talkie Revolution 1926–1930* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Douglas Gomery, *The Coming of Sound: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
2 Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press 1999). (Orig. *La voix au cinéma*. Paris: Editions de l'Étoile, 1982), 12.
3 Des O'Rawe, 'The Great Secret: Silence, Cinema and Modernism', *Screen* 47, no. 4 (2006): 397.
4 Ibid., 400.
5 René Clair, 'The Art of Sound', in *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton, trans. Vera Traill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). (Orig. 1929).
6 John Simon, 1977–78. "The Word on Film". *The Hudson Review* 30, no. 4 (1977–1978): 504.
7 Kevin J. Donnelly, 'Music Cultizing Film: KTL and the New Silents', *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 13, no. 1 (2015): 32.
8 Ann-Kristin Wallengren and Kevin J. Donnelly, 'Music and the Resurfacing of Silent Film: A General Introduction', in *Today's Sounds for Yesterday's Films: Making Music for Silent Cinema*, ed. Kevin J. Donnelly and Ann-Kristin Wallengren (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2015), 3.
9 Paul Flaig and Katherine Groo, 'Introduction: Celluloid Specters, Digital Anachronisms', in *New Silent Cinema*, ed. Paul Flaig and Katherine Groo (New York: Routledge, 2016), 2.
10 Lawrence Howe, 'Charlie Chaplin in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Reflexive Ambiguity in *Modern Times*', *College Literature* 40, no.1 (2013): 59.
11 Jean-Loup Bourget, 'Chaplin and the Resistance to "Talkies"', in *Charlie Chaplin: His Reflection in Modern Times*, ed. Adolphe Nysenholc (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991), 3.
12 Garrett Stewart, 'Modern Hard Times: Chaplin and the Cinema of Self-Reflection', *Critical Inquiry* 3, no. 2 (1976): 305.
13 Donald W. McCaffrey, 'The Golden Age of Sound Comedy', *Screen* 11, no. 1 (1970): 28.
14 Ibid.
15 Stewart, 'Modern Hard Times', 313.
16 Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 12.
17 Clair, 'The Art of Sound', 95. Emphasis in original.

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